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## Melvil Dewey (1851-1931): His Educational Contributions and Reforms

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MELVIL DEWEY (1851-1931):  
HIS EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND REFORMS

By

Michael M. Lee

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

January

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Undeniably, deep appreciation is in order to the author's wife and children for their understanding and cooperation throughout the years.

## VITA

The author, Michael Min-song Lee, was born in Canton China, on December 29, 1936. His elementary education was obtained in Canton, and secondary education in Taiwan.

In 1956, he entered the Foreign Languages and Literature Department of the National Taiwan University, and in June, 1960, received the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Following graduation, he served for eighteen months in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps as a second lieutenant in the Chinese Army. In 1961, he was awarded a scholarship for graduate study in Turkey at the National Ankara University, in the Faculty of History, Geography and Languages. In 1963, he was granted doctoral candidacy for his study of Turkish educational reforms during the period of Kemal Ataturk.

In 1964, he entered the Department of Librarianship at Western Michigan University, and in August, 1965, received the degree of Master of Arts. Beginning September, 1965, he worked as a cataloger at Texas A&I University for two years. In 1967, he accepted a position as head of the Catalog Department at West Center Library, Chicago State University. Subsequently he has served as head librarian at West Center Library, head of public services of the Paul Douglas Library, acting director of libraries, head of library operations, coordinator of planning and development, and head of the reference department. While working at Chicago State University, he has served on various university organizations, such as the university personnel committee, the

university budget committee, the university library committee, the honorary degree committee, and the university chapter of the Phi Delta Kappa as its historian and editor of its newsletter. He has published a series of area study reports concerning China, Middle East and Far East countries in various journals in Chinese and English.

Mr. Lee is married and has two daughters.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

It is probably safe to speculate that people who have ever looked for a book by its call number in a school or public library should know the term "Dewey Decimal Classification," or "Dewey decimal number," because, as a recent survey so indicates: "school and public libraries use DDC almost exclusively."<sup>1</sup> Since libraries have become as common an institution as the school and post office, the name Dewey now could be considered as a household word in many civilized countries. And yet, paradoxically, as one writer remarks:

But however well his name is known, almost nobody knows anything about him. The rampaging Prohibitionist, the old segregationist, the revolutionary, the Christian Bigot, the genius -- these people all were hiding in Dewey behind the decimals.<sup>2</sup>

Here again, the double paradox appears. Even the foregoing writer who claimed to know Dewey personally still neglected to point out the fact that Dewey was first and foremost an educator, or, to be more precise, an educational reformer from the beginning to the end of his long and active life. In his days Dewey was often considered "a

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<sup>1</sup>Richard K. Gardner, "The Decimal Classification and Its Place in Librarianship in North America," Papers Given at the European Centenary Seminar of the Dewey Decimal Classification held at Banbury, England, 26-30 September 1976 (London: Library Association, 1977), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ned Comstock, "The Dewey Dichotomy," Wilson Library Bulletin 52 (January 1978): 400.

century ahead of our time."<sup>3</sup> A century later, today, when some of his educational ideas are recognized by men of vision and adapted by educators, Dewey's name is covered behind these decimals.

Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey (1851-1931), or, Melvil Dui, as he himself would prefer to be called if he could have gotten his way, is known among professional librarians as one of the organizers of the American Library Association in 1876 and the founder of the first School of Library Economy at Columbia College in 1887. Other than that, he is probably unknown. Among library users today, the Dewey Classification System is frequently identified as a scheme related to John Dewey, the well known educator. Even in his own time, just two years after he left his positions as director of the New York State Library School and director of the New York State Library under pressure, his name was forgotten by his peers. This was true even in the journal he had earlier established, and on which he had served as editor for many years; namely,

. . . in Library Journal, reference was made to the men who were particularly active in formulating the principles of librarianship as exemplified particularly in library literature and library doctrine. . . .<sup>4</sup> From this list the name of Melvil Dewey was omitted, . . . .

Admittedly, Melvil Dewey was, and remains, such a controversial figure; he created so many foes as well as friends that he continues to challenge any objective appraisal or definitive biographical study.

Such a situation has not improved much half a century later. In 1951,

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<sup>3</sup>Dorothy Canfield Fisher to Melvil Dewey, 29 January 1927, Melvil Dewey Papers. Rare Book and Manuscripts Library, Columbia University.

<sup>4</sup>Mary E. Ahern, "The Founders of Librarianship," Public Libraries 13 (July 1908): 251.

when the editor of Library Journal offered a list of library leaders for the Library Hall of Fame, Dewey's name was among those wanting "serious biographical studies."<sup>5</sup> Edward Holley, ex-president of the American Library Association and a historian himself, lamented in 1963 over the "Neglect of the Great":

It is almost incredible that the beginning library school student cannot at the present time be handed a definitive biography of that most influential and provocative figure of the late nineteenth century, Melvil Dewey. . . . Looking toward the centennial of ALA in 1976 perhaps the Association should commission a scholar to produce such a work.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, such a work was not produced in 1976. While scholarly biographical research and writing are time consuming and difficult, particularly when the subject one deals with is as controversial and complex as Melvil Dewey, it is still within the bounds of probability that a definite biography of "Melvil Dewey, the Librarian" or similar title will be produced sooner or later, for the need and interest are obviously there among librarians and library students. To evaluate and study Melvil Dewey as an educator or his contribution to educational reforms, however, would seem at this stage uncalled for or, worse yet, untouchable. After all, Melvil Dui would seem to be a misfit in the educational society -- the rampaging prohibitionist, the old segregationist, the revolutionary, the Christian bigot, the genius -- all these attributes appear either undesirable or unpopular as a subject matter, and the complexity and contradiction of Dewey's life and work would keep

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<sup>5</sup>"A Library Hall of Fame," Library Journal 76 (March 1951): 466-72.

<sup>6</sup>Edward Holley, "Neglect of the Great," Library Journal 88 (October 1963): 3549.

most scholars at bay. Indeed, it is easier to write about some positive, standardized educational subjects, but Melvil Dewey as an educator presents difficulties.

It is not easy to write a biography of Melvil Dewey. For one thing he was a genius. And, whether we like to admit it or not, geniuses cannot in fairness be judged by the standards we apply to ordinary folk.<sup>7</sup>

Thus begins Fremont Rider in his fascinating, well organized, but brief monograph on Melvil Dewey. A librarian himself, Rider admitted that

. . . this is no "definitive" biography. But it is, I hope, an interpretative one. Because I count myself fortunate to have worked for nearly two years in close daily association with Dewey, and because it also happens that I married Mrs. Dewey's niece, I had an acquaintance with his family and friends that went beyond professional association.<sup>8</sup>

Despite Rider's careful efforts to be interpretative and objective, however, once Dewey is categorically classified as a genius and demanding different standards of judgment, his appraisal becomes debatable. Furthermore, treating Dewey as an extraordinary librarian, Rider could no longer focus on Dewey's contributions in other areas with a balanced attitude. Instead of calling Dewey's educational work a "contribution," he referred to such activities outside of libraries as Dewey's "diversions," and "really a handicap to his main lifework."<sup>9</sup>

An earlier biography, Melvil Dewey: Seer, Inspirer, Doer,<sup>10</sup> written posthumously in an eulogistical style by an officially design-

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<sup>7</sup>Fremont Rider, Melvil Dewey (Chicago: American Library Association, 1944), p. vii.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>10</sup>Grosvenor Dawe, Melvil Dewey: Seer, Inspirer, Doer (Essex Co., N.Y.: Lake Placid Club, 1932).

nated writer and approved for publication by Dewey's Lake Placid Club, is a lengthy and resourceful work, but also biased. Furthermore, it was criticized by many reviewers:

Though Grosvenor Dawe attempted 'to weave a life story . . . show the man and his way . . . and his major achievements,' Godfrey Dewey found Dawe's appraisal 'wholly inadequate.' He felt that Dawe had failed to give an 'authentic or vital picture either of the man or of his work. . . [a man] wholly selfish in the pursuit of unselfish ideals,' yet accomplishing what 'no lesser genius, perhaps no other human being' could have done.<sup>11</sup>

Godfrey, the son of Melvil Dewey, once wrote a paragraph to describe his father's achievements. To outline what this writer believes to be Dewey's major educational contributions, it is pertinent to quote here Godfrey Dewey's statement:

To sketch in a few words a recognizable picture of as many-sided a genius as my father, Melvil Dewey, is no easy task. . . . Before he was 25 years old, he had developed and published the first edition of the Decimal Classification, had established the Library Journal, and had been the most dynamic factor in the founding of 3 national organizations -- the American Library Association, the Spelling Reform Association, and the Metric Bureau. Before he was 40, the mid-point of his life span, he had established the Library Bureau, which, in addition to its primary function, brought into general use for the first time such today universal labor savers as the card index, vertical file, and loose-leaf binder; had created at Columbia University the first library school and transferred it to Albany as the New York State Library School; had become Secretary of the Regents of the University of the State of New York, in charge of all higher education in the state, and had put thru the Legislature a revision and consolidation of the education laws of the State which affected the Regents; and was at the same time Director of the State Library, the State Library School, and the new Home Education (today we would say Adult Education) Department which he had created. Within 10 years more he had received from the 1900 Paris Exposition three of the very few Grande Prix awarded to this country -- one for his Library Exhibit, one for his Home Education Exhibit, and one to himself personally; and had created and guided thru its early years the institution

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<sup>11</sup> Godfrey Dewey to Grosvenor Dawe, 6 December 1932, quoted in Sarah K. Vann, "Dewey, Melvil (1951-1931)" Dictionary of American Library Biography (Littleton, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1978).

which for the last 25 years of his life was to become the focus of his immense energies -- the world famous Lake Placid Club.<sup>12</sup>

It is this writer's purpose to use Godfrey Dewey's "authentic and vital" biographical sketch as an outline for the rubrics of this study; namely, to discover, to describe, to document and to analyze Dewey's educational ideas and contributions. The writer attempts, furthermore, to study the social background and educational development in Dewey's time so that a better knowledge and understanding will be gained by placing Dewey in the general cultural perspective of his period. Dewey's educational ideas and his attempts at educational reform will be analyzed and compared with prevailing educational trends and social movements of the time. It is the writer's assumption that Dewey, frequently referred to by his biographers as a genius, seer, inspirer, doer and prohibitionist, segregationist, revolutionary and Christian bigot, or, for that matter, just an ordinary man, is inevitably a social-cultural product of his time.

Since Melvil Dewey was and remains a historical figure in library circles, most of the published writings on Dewey deal with his decimal system or his roles in the formation of American Library Association, the library schools at Columbia and in Albany, and his innovative library services. Several doctoral dissertations and many journal articles make mention of Dewey's work as educational leader, but only in a passing and subordinate manner in connection with his library career.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Melvil Dewey, Decimal Classification and Relative Index, 3 vols. (Albany, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1971), vol. 1: "Melvil Dewey," by Godfrey Dewey, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup>Complete citations of these materials are listed in Bibliography.

To retrieve materials of Dewey pertaining to education, Dewey's published writings proved to be the best source. Since Dewey spent six years at Columbia and seventeen years in Albany doing educational work, the libraries of these institutions preserved a surprisingly large amount of primary and secondary sources, partly as institutional documents and archives, partly due to Dewey's habit of keeping all correspondence, memoranda and personal notes. At Columbia, 53,700 items were found catalogued in 105 boxes and 73 folders in the Melvil Dewey Papers, located in the Rare Book and Manuscripts Library of Columbia University. The Godfrey Dewey Papers and other university sources located in the Archives were also examined for comparative and supportive purposes. Similarly, the well-stocked Library of the Graduate School of Library Service at Columbia and the general collection of Butler Library were also searched carefully for relevant materials.

The second largest treasury of primary sources was found in the Manuscripts and History Collection, and in the Education Library in the Education Building (now moved to the new Cultural Education Center), Albany, New York. In addition, the Headquarters Library of the American Library Association, Chicago, the ALA Archives in the University of Illinois Library, Urbana, the relevant documents from the Forest Press Division of the Lake Placid Education Foundation were all carefully examined. The results of such searches were exceedingly fruitful.

Since Melvil Dewey spent almost sixty years of his active life working as an educational reformer, the term "education" would necessarily have to be defined. According to Dewey, education should not be limited to the four walls of the school, nor confined to a certain class



or age group of people. Furthermore, his interest in education lay strongly in the simplification of educational methods and tools, hoping that the learning process would be made more effective and efficient.<sup>14</sup> In this study, therefore, chapters are devoted to libraries and library education as a form of public education, to simplification of English spelling, to metric education, to the educational work of the University of the State of New York, to extension education and adult education, to the Lake Placid Education Foundation and to Dewey's seed-sowing activities.

This study focuses on the concepts and developments of these movements to which Dewey was so fervently devoted, and analyzes the results or influence Dewey achieved. When dealing with his unsuccessful movements such as spelling reform and metric reform, this study does not attempt to examine in detail the pedagogical methods or contents of these movements. Similarly, the curriculum and instruction of library science so initiated by Dewey will not be investigated, since these topics fall outside the scope of Dewey's more important reforms in education. The major concern here is to present Dewey as an individual set against the contemporary society, and to depict his own educational ideas and contributions.

Being a life-long promoter of spelling reforms, most of Dewey's correspondence and notes were written in simplified spellings, abbreviations, or shorthand. Some shorthand notes in the manuscripts collections have been transcribed by his secretary or associates, but

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<sup>14</sup>Dewey's educational ideas and beliefs will be fully discussed in the chapters that follow.

other writings are in the original forms. In quoting from such primary sources, the spellings are kept unchanged in order to preserve the authenticity of Dewey's writings.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FORMATION OF A REFORMER

#### Roots

Melvil Dewey was born December 10, 1851, at Adams Center, a small rural community in the remote northwest end of New York State. His parents, Joel and Eliza, were both descendants of early pilgrims from England.

According to the autobiography of a distant "Dewey cousin," George Dewey, who, as Admiral of the Navy, won the Battle of Manila Bay and attracted national and genealogical attention to the Dewey family, their roots came from Europe:

A desire for religious freedom brought the French Huguenot family of Douai to Kent, in England, in the latter half of the sixteenth century. There the name became Duee. In a later time a desire for religious freedom sent one Thomas Duee, the founder of the American family, from Sandwich, in Kent, to Massachusetts, where the name was changed to Dewey. He settled at Dorchester in 1634, and mention of him appears in the old town records. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The "Biography of John Dewey," edited by the subject's daughter Jane from materials left by the well known educator, contains the following statements regarding the origin of the American Deweys:

The probability is that the family came from Flanders with the weavers who introduced fine weaving into England and bore the name de Wei, "of the meadow." Family tradition states that the parents

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<sup>1</sup>George Dewey, Autobiography of George Dewey, Admiral of the Navy (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 3.

or grandparents of Thomas Dewey left Flanders to escape the persecutions of the Duke of Alva. Certainly Thomas and his descendants were yeoman stock, farmers, wheelwrights, joiners, blacksmiths. . . . Thomas Dewey was one of the settlers of Dorchester, Massachusetts, named for the English town from which many of them came. . . . Their descendants spread out around the Connecticut River valley. John Dewey's great-grandfather, Martin, was born in Westfield, Massachusetts . . . .<sup>2</sup>

Melvil Dewey's great-grandfather, Eleazer, was a teamster in the Continental Army; and his father Joel was Colonel of the Fifty-Fifth New York Infantry by appointment of Governor Silas Wright September 5, 1844. In 1832 Joel Dewey, then a merchant, married Eliza Green who also came of a pioneer strain. Her father, Charles, had settled down at Adams Center in 1805 with his 17-year-old wife and two children.<sup>3</sup> Being a Seventh Day Baptist, Eliza was very religious and thrifty, always stressing one's responsibility to the Almighty God, hard work and forthcoming rewards. In a typical letter addressed to her grown-up son, she expressed the prevailing puritan mood:

My children all work too hard to live long. I am very much worried about you. I know you are taxing yourself too hard. I want you always to try to benefit the world but you cannot afford to do it without being well-paid. You are working hard enough to command big wages.<sup>4</sup>

Even though Joel Dewey was a man of some property and business interests, young Melvil, the last child of the big family, was constantly reminded by his parents to be thrifty; "don't waste," and "make the best bargain you can."<sup>5</sup> Thrift and hard work were deeply rooted in

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<sup>2</sup>Jane M. Dewey, "Biography of John Dewey," in The Philosophy of John Dewey, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1971), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Grosvenor Dawe, Melvil Dewey: Seer, Inspirer, Doer.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

the family, and such characteristics were probably essential for their survival. Aware of Melvil Dewey's growing up under such family traditions and pioneer surroundings, it is not difficult to understand his fanatical urge to work hard, to save time, to be economical, and to be efficient and organized throughout his whole life.

### The Young Man

Melvil's innate ability and remarkable characteristics are best illustrated in a letter by his cousin Eva. She recalls:

Mother was fond of recounting tales of the select school in which she taught the primary grade. Cousin Melvil was one of her pupils and she used to relate how he could work a problem in arithmetic in his head quicker than the others could on paper. He was like lightning in his calculations. Another characteristic was his mania for system and classification. It was his delight to arrange his mother's pantry, systematizing and classifying its contents.<sup>6</sup>

When Melvil was about twelve, having saved up ten dollars by running errands and odd jobs, he walked eleven miles to Watertown to buy a book he had long yearned for -- the Webster's unabridged dictionary. The book was so big and heavy for the child that he had to take the train to get it home. Sixty years later he still recalled vividly: "At last I had the most essential book. For sixty years my faith has been firm that for a boy to have the habit of constantly consulting a great illustrated dictionary is the biggest single factor in his education."<sup>7</sup>

Educational facilities in the mid-nineteenth century in the United States, particularly in the inaccessible northern parts of New York State were rather underdeveloped. School hours and terms were short and curriculum lax; teachers were inexperienced and constantly

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

changing. It is apparent that young Melvil's early education was obtained mostly through his own motivation and self-teaching. His diary first stated: "This is my fifteenth birthday and with the commencement of my sixteenth year I commence keeping a diary journal."<sup>8</sup> Some days later he recorded:

I attended a Teachers Examination today. I had no idea of teaching but entered the class to learn what I could. A. S. Cooley, the Commissioner, said if I wished to teach a school this summer he would give me a certificate.<sup>9</sup>

Evidently, a teaching certificate was not difficult to obtain. There was probably a shortage of applicants so that if a sixteen year-old boy "wished to teach a school" he could do so. The following narrative by a magazine reporter gives a vivid description of the first teaching experience of young Dewey at a one-room log cabin school near Adams Center:

At sixteen, he taught the country school at Toad Hollow. It was the winter term, when the big boys attended. In previous sessions, they had ruled the teacher with a high hand; and Toad Hollow predicted that the new youngster wouldn't last a week.

When he arrived, he found on a platform a battered chair. It had been broken over the head of his predecessor. On the floor were sundry dark stains. These, too, were souvenirs of combat. The teacher's nose had been punched, with the usual results.

But Dewey "lasted" the whole term; and neither chair nor nose were broken. It was simply another case of his joyous faith that people can be induced to take what they ought to have. His interest and enthusiasm kindled an answering interest and enthusiasm in his pupils -- with the results, that, as he told me himself, everybody had a beautiful time.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Melvil Dewey Diaries, December 10, 1866 - August 27, 1877. Melvil Dewey Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. Cited hereafter as the Melvil Dewey Diaries, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Allison Gray, "That Darned Literary Fellow Across the Lake," American Magazine 103 (April 1927): 58-59.

Even though the accuracy of this interesting story is questionable, young Dewey apparently "had a beautiful time" teaching his first school, for he later decided to take another examination for a certificate to teach at Bernhards Bay in Oswego County, New York. Despite the fact that teaching was hardly a glamorous career for an ambitious young man, and Dewey did not have the preparation for the job, yet he seemed to fit in very well. Evidently Dewey took his task seriously and, sometimes, passionately. He wrote at the end of the term:

We had a short general exercise, comparing life to the rivers on the Rocky mountains which starting within a short distance of each other, reach respectively the Arctic, Pacific and Atlantic oceans. I then gave them a short account of myself, my intentions and the circumstance which sent me to them.

After urging them all to be chieftains and giving them my reasons, we all kneeled and closed school with a heartfelt prayer. I was unable to control my feelings & so I was a child with them and we devoted a half hour to a good cry. . . .

As I stood in the door and saw them way up the walk wiping their eyes and looking back so sadly I thanked God that I had not a single blow or cuff or any corporal punishment to regret. . . .<sup>11</sup>

His Bernhards Bay teaching job in 1869 paid three dollars a day and lasted only a term, but it must have been a touching experience. His diaries indicated his emotional strain and attachment to his young charges. Such a rewarding memory might also have led him to decide later to devote his life to the cause of education.

Despite the poor educational conditions, young Melvil was a studious, self-motivated scholar. His diaries show numerous references to reading and studying various subjects ranging from mathematics, Latin and Greek, to contemporary poetry. He tried to read the original version of Caesar through "though poorly prepared to do so." He took home

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<sup>11</sup>Dewey Diaries, Melvil Dewey Papers.

the Intellectual Philosophy of Abercrombie, enjoyed The History of England of Thomas Macaulay but was disappointed that it did not bring him up to the reign of Victoria.

On July 10, 1869, he revealed his self determination to improve himself educationally:

I have not studied very hard this term. . . . Much to my surprise as I had made no effort, my standing was given as the best in school by something over 100, being 2671. 3000 is perfect on everything, an amount never obtained by my knowledge. I propose to raise my standing at least 100 if I attend the Seminary this fall.<sup>12</sup>

Through studying and teaching, he found his mission and goal before he reached the age of eighteen. He claimed on November 15, 1869:

I have now about fully decided to devote my life to education. I wish to inaugurate a higher education for the masses. The more I think of it the more I am convinced that our present system of educational institutions, especially the district and academic schools, are more than half failure. This should not be so. This SHALL not be so! If my life is spared and God permits, the people shall have this subject brought home to their conscience. I say conscience for I believe it to be a great sin for those who have control of youth to allow or rather indirectly compel them to waste so much time in acquiring so little knowledge. . . . But the more I think of this great subject the more I feel a call to wed, to cherish and defend it. May the all wise Creator see fit to make me a willing instrument in His hands to advance this cause, the companion of religion.<sup>13</sup>

Three days later he confirmed his dedication to the cause of education impatiently, with a deliberation and maturity beyond the mentality of a seventeen-year-old boy:

I am anxiously waiting for the day when I shall take my destined place, for it seems that destiny impels me to undertake this as a life work. For four or five years this idea has occurred to me very often and always with increased strength.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.



Naturally his formal schooling was influenced by the development of his father's business. Unfortunately, Joel Dewey was too generous and trusting to be a successful businessman, his store was largely conducted on a charge basis and was not profitable. Young Melvil gradually realized the situation:

From 13 to 16, I spent much time in father's store when not in school or working on some of our land, of which father owned a half dozen pieces within a mile or 2. When there were customers, I waited on them, but most of the time I had for reading, study and digging into father's books to find out the real results of the business. I had studied bookkeeping in school and tried to improve store methods. I finally made a complete inventory, to get rid of the guess work and my figures were convincing that the store was a loss rather than a gain, so I devoted my energy for months to persuading father that it ought to be sold. It had grown into his life so it was very hard for him to give up, but by going back and forth between him and J. Titsworth, a man who had some money and wanted some business I got almost a consent and on the strength of that closed the deal with Titsworth and at last got father clear of what had been a serious burden with no profit.

Before I sold the store, I took father's long leather roll in which he kept the promissory notes due him. There were 155 of them and 133 were outlawed and I doubt if he ever collected the other 22.<sup>15</sup>

After the sale of the general store, the family moved to Oneida in 1869. Melvil first attended Oneida Seminary for a few weeks, then transferred to Alfred University. Twice he wrote to the young president of Harvard, Charles W. Eliot, expressing his desire to enter Harvard and his financial difficulties. His second letter to Eliot revealed his educational ambition as well as his tactful approach to the college president for financial assistance. Thus he wrote:

I address you instead of your Sect'y as I very much wish your own advice. I know well that this is presumption in a stranger but hope you will overlook it in this case and thereby confer a great favor on one who can repay you with thanks alone. Without consuming your time with apologies which I feel are due I will

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

state my case. I am in my nineteenth year, enjoy good health, have been in school either as pupil or teacher since arriving at school age, have parents in limited circumstances who will make any consistent efforts to aid me in getting a higher education.

I have consecrated my life to educational work and design to cast my mite of labor or talent wholly in the balance for the improvement and elevation of our present system of instruction and schools. To accomplish most in this field I feel that it is of vital importance that I myself may receive the best culture and disciplines. For guidance to this culture I have sought your advice and shall be very much influenced by it.

I desire very much to receive a course at Harvard and remain undecided from pecuniary considerations only. . . .<sup>16</sup>

Obviously he did not receive the kind of pecuniary assistance he so expected from Harvard. Borrowing heavily from his father, he went to Amherst College, with the resolution to stay away from social affairs because of economy of time and finance. This freshman stated clearly on July 13, 1870:

I shall mingle in society very little during the next four years. In term time almost none. I shall take the course which I think will give me the most thoro [sic] culture and the greatest ability to do good.<sup>17</sup>

A young man of self-discipline, he kept his own promises throughout his college years. Occasionally, his diaries confirmed his hermetic existence, such as: "Town meeting today; did not attend; have no time for such things." Repeatedly he said: "My social expenses are less than other boys because I keep clear of nearly all of them and am satisfied."<sup>18</sup>

He was so preoccupied with his mission and goals that no reference concerning the Civil War nor the Reconstruction period appeared in

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<sup>16</sup>Melvil Dewey to Charles W. Eliot, 30 April 1870, Facsimile reproduced in Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup>Dewey Diaries, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

all his diaries and papers. Only during the semester break of 1873, just before returning to Amherst as a junior, did he review his college progress and commented:

There's a score of things in my mind that I would like to think out here in my journal but I've acquired a vile habit of neglecting such matters. So many things come to me. Surely this age is the one when a man's ideas are strangely confused and unsettled. It's a very luxury to feel settled on any point. I'm quite delighted when I find myself come to definite decisions on any subject. It seems good to look at your decision and cling to it, feeling it is your own . . .

. . . Real life is approaching. Only two years more of college seclusion and then I'm to mingle more or less with the busy world and it's time I began to drift into it a little. For a long time I've read no current news and totally disregarded politics etc. . . . My great object is of course, to familiarize myself with my own chosen [education] work. I shall also make a specialty of learning all I can in this direction by visiting schools, reading books & making inquiries, etc.

My second new departure is in a way of books and reading, especially public libraries. I propose to take extra pains to post myself on this subject as a very important branch of my main labors, as it seems to me I can exert a very great influence for good in this way. I shall certainly like the work.<sup>19</sup>

For all practical purposes, this ambitious youth was predicting precisely what he was going to do, and what he was going to be:

I thought that I would like to teach mathematics, study, practice and teach architecture where one could build his ideas into permanent form; but I always realized that out of a score of things that had greatly attracted me, I could only do with one life and so I determined that my highest usefulness would be not to do anyone of these things, but to stimulate others to take up the work. I thought I might on an average each year induce one person to do some important work that he would not have done except for my influence. Thus in 50 years I would really have accomplished 50 things instead of one by raising myself to the second power, seeking out and inspiring and guiding others to do the work for which my own life did not give time. So, instead of "teaching" I always use the word "education" in naming my chosen profession.<sup>20</sup>

During the remainder of his Amherst years, he read widely, visited many schools and libraries in New England and New York areas, made many

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

inquiries to leading educators and librarians in the country. He made such a decision and clung to it through all the years. What he dreamt and promised himself wholeheartedly -- to be an educational reformer and inspirer for the masses -- became reality long before he reached the prime of his life.

#### The Formation of a Reformer

Five diary books of Melvil Dewey are kept in the Manuscripts Collection, Butler Library, Columbia University. An elegantly printed label bearing the letters "M. R. Dewey" was placed on the cover of each one of them. This special label was also used by Dewey to mark his other personal properties.

He recorded that he went to Adams Center and bought some bone cufflinks inscribed with an "R" when he was fifteen. So it seems that Melvil Dewey was obsessed with this initial "R". But why the letter "R" since there is not a single "r" in his full name? That was his boyhood secret and his life long ambition: The "R" stood for "Reformer"!

To understand the mind of this self-labelled young Reformer, it is necessary to trace back to his earlier full name -- Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey, which he had not used since manhood. The year he was born, Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot and ex-President of the new republic, was visiting the United States. Melvil's father, like many other Americans, was a great admirer of that Hungarian hero. As young Melvil became interested in simplified spelling and saving time, he first dropped the name "Louis," then the "Kossuth" and the "le" of Melville, and finally, for a while, tried to shorten the "Dewey" to

"Dui" after he discovered that his ancestral name was "Duee." Even though he was not successful in reforming his last name, he remained a reformer in many other ways, mainly, in educational systems.

On December 10, 1869, Dewey declared loud and clear in his diary:

Tomorrow I complete my 18th year and have accomplished during these 18 years what I hope my children, if I even have any, (and not only hope but expect) will accomplish better in fifteen or even less. I started to write 'twelve' but stopped because I feared it might be extravagant. As far as education or discipline and development of the mind are concerned I am very sure fourteen years might accomplish it all.

Obviously he realized at that time that he was too eager a reformer at heart to be a conforming, humble missionary in religious work. He wrote on the same day:

I can't comprehend or adopt very many of the orthodox views of our or of any church. . . . I have conscientiously chosen another field of labor and should feel myself unfaithful to any new espousal if I should devote much time to other business or professions. I believe it just as necessary and honorable to work in the suburbs (as I sometimes call education) of the Holy Field, as to be engaged more directly in this service. . . . I think some power has continually pointed out and urged me on toward an educational mission.

I do not think as some enthusiastic youths are apt to think, that I can change our educational system as if by magic but if I can succeed in opening the smallest aperture in the great dam of error, quackery and ignorance that now so thoroughly obstructs the channel of educational improvement I shall be abundantly satisfied.<sup>21</sup>

He must be very much disturbed by the contemporary educational situations; thus he lamented: "Whichever way I turn I see something that sadly needs improvement and as this is so with myself it is also true with the rest of the world and its people." Then he said: "I will not

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

allow myself to consume the God-given time in such reveries." He confirmed later on: "The world is in a great mass of untouched work and while I am attacking it I have no time for such reflections."<sup>22</sup>

On his twenty-first birthday, at Amherst College, the need of more reform activities were coming up in his diary, such as the interest in free libraries and his "breves" and "takigraphy" (a shorthand system) for saving time.

The reading leaves me more than ever impressed w e importance of public libraries & I feel thankful for e strong interest in e work, that has come to me during e last year. My educational interest could hardly be much stronger than it has b for several years -- of course larger culture gives tone to all one's ideas and aims, but e fact remains e same viz -- my World -- Free Schools & Free Libraries for every soul.<sup>23</sup>

It was in the beginning of his junior year he started working in the library as an assistant, that he somehow mastered David Phillip Lindsly's tachygraphy and created his own system of abbreviations for speed writing. Thus, he announced on December 10, 1873, in his diary: "My 22d birthday and with it I commence a new sistem of writing, namely takigraphy." From that day on he made all his diary journals, accounts, notes and drafts in abbreviations or shorthand. He was so enthusiastic about this time saving device that he started to teach other students tachygraphy for a fee. In one term, he had three classes going with fifty-two students. Then the college interfered with this unauthorized extra-curriculum offering. However, such a conflict was settled after some negotiation:

Jan. 27, 1875. Work in the library all day. Saw Burgess in the morning & told him that rather than having the thing fall thru I would teach for nothing & work in the library for nothing what

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

time I could spare the rest of the term. This costs me even the \$200 that my special division were to pay me so I shall sink about \$300 in the matter. The faculty accepted my offer and named the task as a required study the rest of the term two days a week.<sup>24</sup>

The needs of his other life-long educational and social reforms also germinated early, all originating from his zealous desire to save time and money, to be efficient and simplified. For example, in 1865 when Melvil Dewey was only fourteen, and under the influence of the wave of the national temperance movement, he joined a lodge of Good Templars and became a militant officer. A speech delivered at the Good Templars Lodge No. 70 at Adams Center demonstrated the boy's scholarly development at sixteen. His research on tobacco covered the origin of the plant, its effects on the intellect, and on physical conditions, by quoting from various medical journals. His closing argument rested on the use of tobacco creating an appetite for strong drink, and financial waste:

You call a man a moderate smoker indeed, who uses but 1 cigar in 24 hours, but followed up for 50 years, your moderate smoker has blown away in smoke, what with its interest, would have amounted to \$14,794.50.

. . . it is the duty of all Christians and Good Templars to discontinue in all honorable ways, the manufacture, sale and use of tobacco.<sup>25</sup>

Bringing the subject home to his father, he made him give up one of the most lucrative parts of the general store:

I told him: "You have no right to sell tobacco and cigars in your store as you have for so many years & I am going to clean out the whole store." I went to the other store & told them if they would take our stock off our hands at cost, we would never sell tobacco again & they could have the entire business. They did so & father didn't veto my high-handed proceeding, so that put us morally right.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Dewey Diaries, Melvil Dewey Papers.

From this incident, one can see the self-righteous nature of Melvil Dewey and his peculiar ability of rationalization which would come to dominate his whole life. Stopping the sale of tobacco and cigars in their store did not lead to the decline of tobacco consumption in Adams Center, but "that put us morally right." When they gave up that lucrative part of the business, the whole business of the general store suffered and they finally had to sell the store and moved to Oneida, New York.

After spending a few weeks at Oneida Seminary and one term at Alfred University, a Seventh Day Adventist school, Dewey decided to go to Amherst College. It was said that the major reason

. . . he chose Amherst, [was] because it was, at that time, the only college requiring daily gymnasium exercise. He thought he 'ought to have' this physical training, so he went to Amherst. Not many people are so willing to take the medicine they prescribe for others.<sup>27</sup>

Some of the interests which developed at Amherst and were carried over into his whole life were horsemanship and his appreciation for outdoor sports and maintenance of health.

It also seemed that Amherst was an academically stimulating place because of its able faculty at that particular period. In 1870, its faculty consisted of President William Stearn, John W. Burgess, John Bates Clark, William Montague, Julius Seelye, and other well known scholars. Later in his diaries, Melvil Dewey referred to their names occasionally with regard to the assistance they offered on his library decimal classification project and the advice they gave him concerning

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<sup>27</sup> Gray, "That Darned Literary Fellow Across the Lake," p. 59.



life and work. Burgess later became the department head of political science at Columbia; Clark, an eminent economist, also became a distinguished professor at Columbia; Professor Montague was also the head of the library where Dewey worked as assistant and later created the decimal system; Professor Seelye later went to India for a year to preach to the Brahmins and then became the president of Amherst; athletic instructor Edward Hitchcock was well known for his physical training program and his activities in the anti-alcohol, anti-smoking Antivenenean Society. Thus one source suggests:

From very early days the sense of a mission was impressed upon the student on every possible occasion. Amherst chose the device of a sun and a Bible illuminating a globe by their united radiance while underneath are the words 'Terras Irradiant.'<sup>28</sup>

Such a sense of mission and special appreciation for physical fitness and abstinence exerted a strong influence on Amherst's students and particularly on the life of Dewey. A generation later, an educational associate of Melvil Dewey confirmed this conception when he told him:

I see by the cover of your Decimal Classification that you are an Amherst man. That accounts for it all. Every Amherst man I meet has individual energy, and good motive: so much so, that a year ago I sent my son Matthew there for his prelims., and this year he enters.<sup>29</sup>

While at Amherst, Dewey belonged to the Antivenenean Society which pledged the members "to abstain while connected with the institution,

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<sup>28</sup>Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 46.

<sup>29</sup>George W. Van Siclen to Melvil Dewey, April 18, 1898. Melvil Dewey Papers.

from the use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage as well as from opium and tobacco," and he was so eager to reform the others he "got Parker & Fisk to swear off from smoking for a week & got Parker's last cigar." Then he happily stated after an evening's long conversation with friends: "Talked with Bertie, trying to stimulate him to high endeavors, in which I think I was quite successful."<sup>30</sup>

His life-long interest in metric reform also began early. At fourteen, he composed two papers on "The Metric System of Measurement." One was delivered before the Adams Center High School on October 9, 1867, and dealt with the background and history of the metric system; the other one was delivered before the Hungerford Collegiate Institute at Adams on December 23 and called for public understanding and reform:

Any person of ordinary capacity, can easily and perfectly learn the Metric System in a few minutes; while it takes hours of hard study to learn the old but imperfectly. . . .

Spend a few moments in learning this system and thus help to spread one of the greatest of reforms, uniformity in measurement.<sup>31</sup>

Another paper on the same subject was delivered at Oneida Seminary when Dewey was eighteen. After more research and more campaign experience, he argued forcefully:

We have as measures of weight, avoirdupois, apothecaries and troy. These are not wholly perfect; for instance, when you buy medicine there are sixteen ounces in a pound but when they are mixed there are only twelve. . . . Instances of this kind might be multiplied by hundreds. . . .<sup>32</sup>

On and on he listed all the confusions and complications of the traditional system and the simplicity and accuracy of the Metric System,

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<sup>30</sup> Dewey Diaries, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Dawe, Melvil Dewey, pp. 35-36.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

then he ended with a summons to reform:

Yet this difficulty must be overcome. The world is now so bound together by its railroads and its shipping that it cannot and will not long submit to so great an inconvenience in all its commercial transactions. But certainly the system can never be used by the people until it be learned by the people. Therefore let me urge each and every one of you who has not already done so, to make himself master of this subject, to cast his entire influence, be it great or small, on the side of its adoption, and to hope and expect to see the present awkward and inconsistent system of American and English weights and measures done away forever.<sup>33</sup>

In 1870 when he was nineteen and a student at Alfred University, he found another traditional system, the Roman Notation, should be reformed and done away with forever because

. . . the system itself is awkward in construction and almost incapable of being used in rapid computations. On the other hand, we have, in the Arabic or Indian notation, a method of writing numbers, accurate, simple, and probably as nearly perfect as man can invent. That, awkward and ambiguous, used only enough to compel everyone to be familiar with it; This, simple and accurate, in almost universal requisition. Why shall we not use it, then, exclusively.<sup>34</sup>

Years later, he reminisced with an anecdote aboard a train with a state senator and a lawyer, and how he almost drove them insane by asking them to multiply LXXXVII by XXXVIII in Roman numerals.

His interest in Arabic numerals, their simplicity and clarity, soon led him to the adoption of the Dewey Decimal System of classification for the Amherst College Library. Quite naturally this simple and clear Decimal Classification scheme soon became the most popular system in libraries all over the world.

A true reformer, Dewey devoted his whole life to revising and updating his decimal system, thus making it always viable in our rapidly

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 43

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

changing world of knowledge, and he insisted on using simplified spelling in the subsequent editions of the Classification to make the book a powerful vehicle for the advancement of spelling reform.

Being a self-labelled reformer living in an age of rapid expansion of knowledge and scientific discoveries, he was so firm in his belief of social and educational improvement that probably he never doubted the perfectability of man and his tools.

A manuscript written in 1869 and delivered before the Oneida Seminary gives strong evidence to his life-long belief and struggle -- "Improvement":

There is a set of old fogies, who are continually croaking "let well enough alone." Never will they consent to any material change. The word itself is as hateful to their ears as felony or murder. . . . Suppose the world had taken this advice, . . . Today -- our homes would be cabins of logs lighted and warmed by the blazing back log; our uncouth clothing rudely fashioned and made; our fields cultivated with the unweildy implements of a century ago; the grain harvested handful by handful with the sickle and threshed bundle by bundle with the awkward flail; the corn shelled ear by ear with a rusty bayonet or pounded in a barrel; a person able to read and write the exception and not the rule and a book almost as great a rarity as a school house. The stage coach would be our only means of communication; the elegance and speed of the steam-boat and railroad, to us a dream more inconsistent than the successful navigation of the air; the wonders of the telegraph and cable, a madness more preposterous than a visit to Venus or to Mars or an evening's call on the man in the moon.

Had the wants of humanity a voice the continual cry would be Men! Men! Men! Not the weak and vacillating, not the coward or the traitor, but warm-hearted, broad-shouldered men, ready, willing, eager to stand foremost in the struggle for the right; earnest, energetic disciples of "Improvement."<sup>35</sup>

This school composition by the eighteen-year-old Dewey fully revealed the writer's ambition and inclination -- improvements and reforms through scientific discoveries and modern inventions, perpetual reforms and improvements. In a way, this is a proclamation of a forceful

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-42.

reformer, because for the next sixty-two years Melvil Dewey kept moving toward his goal -- an unattainable goal for perpetual improvements. Being a reformer, he was never satisfied with the prevailing conditions, so he kept on moving restlessly forward, onward. Before he was twenty-five years old, he had developed and published the first edition of the Decimal Classification, had become the editor of the first professional library journal, and had been the most dynamic factor in the founding of three national educational organizations -- the American Library Association, the Spelling Reform Association, and the Metric Bureau -- all of these were just the beginning of a life long struggle for educational improvements and reforms.

## CHAPTER III

### PROFESSIONALIZATION OF LIBRARIANS

#### The Decimal Classification System

Young Dewey believed strongly that education was the primary instrument for social and individual improvement; since improvement has no bounds, education should not be limited to certain years of formal schooling or confined to a certain group on a certain discipline. He found that libraries could serve as an important agent of continuing education and self-improvement for all men. At a time when the demand for information and scientific knowledge increased rapidly with the social and industrial development of that age, Dewey's interest in library development was logical and commendable.

Similar to the early developmental stage of the public schools, public and academic libraries sprang up across the country without proper management and systematic, standardized patterns to follow. Each library had its own way of classifying, shelving and managing its collection. The job of a librarian was merely that of a keeper of books and curator of a building. The unmanageable conditions and the need for improvement at Amherst College library, as at libraries elsewhere, must have been a very agonizing and challenging issue for young Dewey. In later years he recalled his struggle to improve the situation:

In visiting over 50 libraries, I was astounded to find the lack of efficiency, and waste of time and money in constant recataloging and reclassifying made necessary by the almost universally used

fixed system where a book was numbered according to the particular room, tier, and shelf where it chanced to stand on that day, instead of by class, division and section to which it belonged yesterday, today and forever. Then there was the extravagant duplication of work in examining a new book for classification and cataloging by each of a 1000 libraries instead of doing this once for all at some central point.

The vision of wonderful possibilities before libraries was inspiring, but money available for the work was not one percent of what was needed even with greatest economy, and even this little money seem hardly fifty percent efficient because of wasteful duplication and crude methods.<sup>1</sup>

Since inefficiency and waste were two capital sins to Dewey, his mind would not rest until a solution could be found. According to the narration of Dewey, the solution came to him like the tale of Archimedes:

For months I dreamed night and day that there must be somewhere a satisfactory solution. In the future were thousands of libraries, most of them in charge of those with little skill or training. The first essential of the solution must be the greatest possible simplicity. The proverb said "simple as a, b, c," but still simpler than that was 1,2,3. After months of study, one Sunday during a long sermon by President Stearns, while I looked steadfastly at him without hearing a word, my mind absorbed in the vital problem, the solution flashed over me so that I jumped in my seat and came very near shouting "Eureka"! It was to get absolute simplicity by using the simplest known symbols, the arabic numerals as decimals, with the ordinary significance of nought, to number a classification of all human knowledge in print.<sup>2</sup>

On May 8, 1873, Dewey presented his "original idea" for a library classification system to the Library Committee of Amherst College as follows:

Select the main classes, not to exceed nine and represent each class by one of the nine significant figures (ten digits). Subdivide each of these main heads into not more than nine subordinate classes, and represent each sub-class by a digit in the first, or ten's, decimal place. Sub-classify each, or any, of these eighty-one (hundred) classes, into not more than nine subclasses; and

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<sup>1</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Decimal Classification Beginnings," Library Journal 45 (February 1920): 151.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

assign to each, one of the digits in the second decimal place. Thus the subclasses may be increased in any part of the library without limit; each additional decimal place increasing the minuteness of classification ten-fold. . . .

Books of a general character, embracing more than one topic or subject would remain in the general class, e.g., A Dictionary of Science would receive no sub-classification but remain simply with main class number. . . .

After explaining the technical organization of the new system, he went on to promote the merits of his system:

A somewhat extended personal examination of the various systems of classification in use by the large libraries of this country, and such facts as were accessible concerning library economy abroad, lead me to think the proposed system better than any single one now in use for the following reasons.

It allows of any and all changes in building, shelving, etc., without any change whatever in the press marks as first catalogued. Each book being located relatively to the other books according to its subject; and not according to a wooden shelf, it is clear that so long as the book is by the same author and on the same subject there is nothing to be changed in any removal or recataloguing. . . .

Books on the same subject are found all together (as far as it is possible to make close classification of books) and no growth of special subjects, or limitation space, or changes of any kind ever separate them. This is of the greatest utility to the library staff and such persons as have access to the shelves since they find in one place all the resources of the library on the subject they came to investigate. . . .

This grouping also shows at once what imperfections or wants the library has in any department, also if there are any duplicates, since they would appear side by side. . . .

The system is easily understood and applied equally well to a library of a hundred volumes or of a million, it being capable of indefinite and accurate growth.<sup>3</sup>

The Library Committee must have been very impressed by this proposal for they accepted it and asked Dewey to reclassify the whole library collection according to his new system. Dewey's classmate and lifelong associate, Walter Stanley Biscoe, assisted in the task and several Amherst professors gave advice in the subject categories of their

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<sup>3</sup>"Original Idea of May 8, 1873," submitted to Library Committee of Amherst College, Melvil Dewey Papers.



respective fields. Dewey first worked as a student assistant, then, after graduation, as "assistant librarian" under Professor Montague, the faculty member at Amherst College responsible for library matters. After three years of experiment and refinement at Amherst Library, the first edition of his work A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library was published anonymously by the Amherst College in 1876.<sup>4</sup> Blessed with foresight and ambition, Dewey wrote to the U. S. Copyright Office to assure protection of his work in March, and had additional copies printed for national distribution at his own expense.

Obviously, free distribution of the publication was a wise move for the young Dewey. It made his name known among librarians, and the timing was perfect. A prominent librarian, Charles Ammi Cutter, of the Boston Athenaeum, was specially impressed by Dewey's work and wrote to the library-minded John Eaton on April 20, 1876 praising the new Classification. It happened at that time that General Eaton, the second U. S. Commissioner of Education from 1870 to 1886, was preparing a library report as part of the Bureau of Education's contribution to the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. On April 27, 1876, Commissioner Eaton wrote to Dewey requesting a description of the Decimal Classification system as a possible chapter for his special report.<sup>5</sup> Motivated by the Commissioner's request, young Dewey polished his work and wrote

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<sup>4</sup> A Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets of a Library (Hartford, Conn.: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1876; reprinted ed., Albany, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> Dewey Diaries, Melvil Dewey Papers.

a lengthy Introduction to explain the method of using the Classification with catalog, and promoting the merits of his system unabashedly:

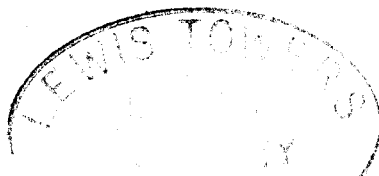
Compared with other systems it is less expensive; more easily understood, remembered, and used; practical rather than theoretical; brief and familiar in its nomenclature; superior to all others in arranging pamphlets, sale duplicates, and notes, and in indexing; susceptible of partial and gradual adoption without confusion; more convenient in keeping statistics and checks for books off the shelves; the most satisfactory adaption of the card catalogue principle to the shelves. It requires less space to shelve the book; uses simpler symbols and fewer of them; can be expanded without limit and without confusion or waste of labor on both catalogues and shelves or in the catalogues alone; checks more thoroughly and conveniently against mistakes; admits more readily numerous cross-reference; is unchangeable in its call numbers, and so gives them in all places where needed, as given in no other system; in its index affords an answer to the greatest objection to classed catalogues, and is the first satisfactory union of the advantages of the classed and dictionary system.<sup>6</sup>

The Bureau of Education published the special report Public Libraries in the United States of America in late 1876, just in time to catch the attention of librarians in the Philadelphia Convention. Although some librarians might know about the Amherst system from the copies Dewey had sent out, the Bureau of Education's special report gave Dewey the best publicity no other agencies could provide. Of all the classification schemes the special report presented, Dewey's presentation and actual scheme far excelled the others.

As subsequent expanded and improved editions appeared, acceptance of Dewey's scheme by libraries gradually increased. According to A Survey of Libraries in the United States by the American Library Association in 1927, it was used in 96 per cent of all public libraries in

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<sup>6</sup>U.S. Bureau of Education, Public Libraries in the United States of America; Their History, Condition, and Management. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876), pt. 1, p. 641.



the U. S., in 89 per cent of college and university libraries, and in many thousands of other libraries in the States and foreign countries.<sup>7</sup>

In 1900, when the new librarian of the Library of Congress, Herbert Putnam, decided to replace the obsolescent system then in use, he was considering the possibility of a revised Dewey Classification, as this was evidenced by his letter to Dewey:

I have heard it said that you were engaged upon a revision of the Decimal Classification. Is this true? If so, when will the revision, or any part of it be ready for use?

I ask not from any mere abstract interest, but because we are about to reclassify. If by any possibility I can justify the use of D.C. I shall prefer to use it. In its present form, the arguments against its use in this library seem insuperable. Our work of reclassification will, however, extend over several years, and it may be that your revision will proceed fast enough to keep pace with us.

You can understand one obvious necessity in the case of this Library: the disproportionate provision for Americana.

I understand that while you have not patented the Classification, you stipulate against its use in part; or rather, the assignment of any part of the notation to classes or sub-classes varying from those for which it stands in your scheme. Would you feel stringent about this stipulation in case we should find it possible to use here the notation in the main, but should find it impracticable to use it precisely in some of the sub-divisions.<sup>8</sup>

Such a request was difficult for Dewey to comply with because the Decimal Classification, popular for many public and school libraries, should not undergo any drastic change to suit a special library which might cause the others to make expensive reclassifications.

This was a fateful decision for the Dewey system. Consequently Charles Martel and James C.M. Hanson designed the new Library of Congress

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<sup>7</sup> American Library Association, A Survey of Libraries in the United States. 4 vols. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1927), 4: 7.

<sup>8</sup> David Mearns, "The Library of Congress under Putnam," in Reader in American Library History, ed. Michael Harris (Washington: Microcard Editions, 1971), p. 235.

Classification based on Charles A. Cutter's newly published Expansive Classification. The Library of Congress began printing and selling catalog cards bearing the new class numbers to other libraries; and half a century later, when the computerized national networks adopted the Library of Congress Classification for their centralized library services, more and more libraries were driven to convert their classification from DDC to LCC. Such massive conversion is not simply a decline or loss of the Dewey system, in terms of educational efficiency and practicality, the Library of Congress system is not exactly the best system for school and public library usage for it was designed to house multi-million volumes in a national library with stacks mostly closed to the public users. As a popular scheme for bibliographic organization and diffusion of knowledge for so many and so long, Dewey indeed contributed remarkably to public education. Even today, most public and school libraries still hold on to the traditional Dewey system for its simplicity and efficiency.

Today the DDC is healthy, forward-looking, and genuinely international in scope. Continuous revision and centralized application at the Decimal Classification Division of the Library of Congress to cover 100,000 titles annually make it an up-to-date classification whose numbers, through MARC tapes and LC cards, reach libraries of all sizes throughout the world.<sup>9</sup>

Thus concluded John Phillip Comaromi in his most thorough 678-pages study on the historical development of the Decimal Classification. Originally written as a dissertation,<sup>10</sup> this publication also provides

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<sup>9</sup>John Phillip Comaromi, The Eighteen Editions of the Dewey Decimal Classification, (Albany, N.Y.: Forest Press, Lake Placid Education Foundation, 1976), p. 611.

<sup>10</sup>John Phillip Comaromi, "A History of the Dewey Decimal Classification: Editions One Through Fifteen, 1876-1951" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1969).

detailed research materials on the possible influences on Dewey's decimal "original idea" and discussions on contemporary classification schemes. According to Professor Comaromi, the outline of the DDC is based on the scheme that William Torrey Harris prepared for the St. Louis Public School Library based on Hegelian philosophic underpinnings, rather than the Baconian classification of knowledge as most historians of classification systems would tend to conclude.<sup>11</sup> But whatever it owes its origin to, it was the young man from Amherst that brought the system to fruition.

#### The 1876 Conference and the Library Journal

Dewey left Amherst for Boston on April 10, 1876, possibly intending to join the service of Ginn Brothers, a publishing firm later known as Ginn & Heath Co. The following entries from his diary indicate his intentions to move to the cultural capital of Boston.

On April 19, he wrote:

Went to Harvard again this morning and talked with them about the scheme etc. John Fiske said they all been talking about it and the more they talked of it the more they were convinced that they must use it.

Mr. Abbot was brought round by Mr. Sibley and spent two hours talking it over. He gave me, much to my surprize, the strongest recommendations I have yet received from anyone. I came in and got dinner at 3, talked with Fred Ginn till 5 then with Mr. Cutter till 6 about starting a library bureau and publishing a library monthly. After supper talked with Mr. [Edwin] Ginn till 9.<sup>12</sup>

John Fiske, Ezra Abbot, and John Langdon Sibley were all librarians at Harvard. Perhaps Dewey was having an eye for Harvard, but

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<sup>11</sup>Comaromi, The Eighteen Editions, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup>Dewey Diaries, Melvil Dewey Papers.

his real ambition was "starting a library bureau and publishing a library monthly." This was confirmed the next day in his diary:

Got up an hour late and did not get into the store till 9. Had proof from Hartford and spent most of my time getting it ready to go back. . . . After supper, having talked with Cutter till 5:30 I went over to Ginn's and talked with him and Fred about the library enterprise and they agreed with me to undertake it as a private matter, Edwin Ginn taking half and Fred Ginn and I each one-fourth interest in it; I to take the entire management of the matter and draw \$2000 salary from the firm (we 3) for my annual salary.<sup>13</sup>

Before he actually carried out his plans with the Ginn brothers, he happened to meet Frederick Leypoldt, book seller and publisher of the Publishers' Weekly and his partner, Richard Rodgers Bowker in New York. Leypoldt and Bowker were preparing an editorial to call a library conference, for a librarians' meeting would help sell more books and also generate support for a library periodical which they were thinking of establishing. Dewey was delighted to find them sharing the same interests with him and together they decided to start the Library Journal. The next day Dewey took the train to Philadelphia and asked Commissioner Eaton for support.<sup>14</sup> It just happened that Eaton himself had corresponded with several chief librarians earlier regarding the possibility of a librarians conference during the centennial, since other educational groups would be doing the same thing. When Eaton suggested the idea earlier to the librarian of the Library of Congress, Ainsworth Rand Spofford, his response was that it did not "seem sanguine that a convention of librarians would accomplish much practical good."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>John Eaton to Thomas H. Williams, February 8, 1876, quoted in Edward Holley, Raking the Historic Coals; the ALA Scrapbook of 1876 (Chicago: Beta Phi Mu, 1967), p. 5.

When the enthusiastic Dewey approached Eaton on May 19, the Commissioner immediately agreed to support his "library project" and endorsed Dewey's call for a library conference.<sup>16</sup>

Several points are worth mentioning here. In the first place, there was a librarians conference as early as 1853 in New York, initiated by Charles Benjamin Norton and his assistants Seth Hastings Grant and Daniel Coit Gilman.<sup>17</sup> Norton was a book seller and publisher of the Norton's Literary Gazette and Norton's Literary and Educational Register. Assisting Norton were two young librarians from New York Mercantile Library "moonlighting" as editors. Seth Grant, who after seventeen years as librarian moved on to be the vice president of U.S. National Bank. Daniel Gilman, librarian at Yale for seventeen years, became president of the new University of California, then organized a new research university in Baltimore through the bequest of railroad financier Johns Hopkins.

An editorial first appeared in Norton's Literary Gazette, probably written by either Grant or Gilman, suggesting the idea of a librarians convention; then more articles followed. As a result, twenty-five prominent librarians and educators, including Henry Barnard and Barnas Sears, signed a call for conference. The conference was held September 15 to 17, 1853. On the second day, Reuben A. Guild, librarian of Brown University, proposed that a permanent library organization with annual meetings be established. The resolution was passed and a Committee for Permanent Organization was appointed, but nothing actually

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<sup>16</sup> Dewey Diaries, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>17</sup> George B. Utley, The Librarians' Conference of 1853 (Chicago: American Library Association, 1951), pp. 7-9.

happened till Dewey came around twenty-three years later. It was probably due to the similar role Gilman and Dewey played in librarians' conference that the two became good friends in later years (see Appendix A).

Dewey claimed later that he had been thinking about a library conference and a national association for a few years, and he had talked to other librarians in Boston concerning such cooperation, yet such evidence was absent from his diaries and other surviving records. He did meet and talk to many Boston librarians previously and the idea might have come up in their discussion, but this is an argument from silence. Dewey deserved the credit, however, while the others only talked about organization, Dewey acted on the idea and promoted it to the fullest extent. A similar situation is found in the Dewey Decimal Classification: while others accusing him of incorporating ideas from other schemes, "that which is new in his system is not good, and that which is good is not new," Dewey simply worked harder and longer on his system and promoted it far and wide.

In fact, Dewey's initial telegrams to library leaders seeking endorsement for the calling of a meeting in Philadelphia were greeted with suspicion and hesitation. Ainsworth Spofford declined to lend his name "because I have always entertained insuperable objections to figuring in conventions (usually mere wordy outlets for impracticables and pretenders)." He added that he looked "with distrust upon mixing the methods of the bibliographer, which are those of patient and accurate research, with the methods of the stump, which are conspicuously the reverse."<sup>18</sup> He wrote to William Frederick Poole, librarian of the

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<sup>18</sup>"Spofford to Leyboldt, May 29, 1876," quoted in Holley, Raking the Historic Coals, p. 43.



Chicago Public Library and editor of Poole's Index, that a Massachusetts Congressman who knew Amherst well said that Dewey was "a tremendous talker, and a little of an old maid,"<sup>19</sup> Poole, veteran of the 1853 conference and a cautious man, wrote to his good friend Justin Winsor of the Boston Public Library that there were "axes to be ground" and "It won't pay for you and me to attend that barbecue."<sup>20</sup> Justin Winsor, however, had received a visit from Dewey and was evidently impressed, for he decided to work with Dewey and accepted the chairmanship of the organizing committee, thus Poole was convinced by Winsor and agreed to be a member of the committee.<sup>21</sup> Poole's rebuttal to Dewey's criticism later reflected the general attitude of those established masters regarding the initial call for a conference:

You have in mind some hesitation of mine in giving in my name when it was asked by telegraph. I then had no information on which I could base an opinion as to the scheme. I am not a person to go blindly into a scheme until I know who is behind it. I never expressed any opposition to the conference idea provided it was backed by such men as Winsor, Cutter, and others in whom I had confidence. When that fact was brought to my notice, I sailed in, and have done my level best. To have taken any other course, would not have been my way of doing business.<sup>22</sup>

In other words, the establishment would not venture into any unconventional business with the novice, but young Dewey managed to have Commissioner John Eaton printed and sent out the call with enough leading

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<sup>19</sup> Poole to Dewey, December 28, 1883, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>20</sup> Poole to Winsor, May 27 and May 31, 1876, quoted in William Landram Williamson, William Frederick Poole and the Modern Library Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 94.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Poole to Dewey, December 28, 1883, Melvil Dewey Papers.

librarians' signatures for a national conference. The first issue of the Library Journal, with Dewey as the managing editor, also played up the conference news.

One hundred and three librarians attended this second conference held from October 4 through 6, 1876. Henry Barnard, ex-Commissioner of Education, and Samuel Warren from the Bureau of Education, also participated. Justin Winsor was elected president of the conference, and Reuben Guild, Charles Evans, and Melvil Dewey were chosen as secretaries.

As the conference progressed, young Dewey emerged as the moderator of the whole group. A careful study of the proceedings revealed his driving spirit and secret ambition to establish the library association, to have the association adopt the Journal as the official organ of the association, and to promote standardization and uniformity of library processes. When the meeting stuck in the discussion of the constitution of the proposed association, he convinced the group to form the association first, and let its officers draft the constitution and by-laws later;<sup>23</sup> when the discussion drifted away from the adoption of the Journal, he proposed that issues could be discussed to better advantage through the columns of the Library Journal;<sup>24</sup> when the group debated over his proposal to form a Cooperative Committee to improve efficiency and economy of library work, to study cooperative indexing and cataloging, he reminded the group repeatedly of the limit of time, and demanded a vote which established the Committee;<sup>25</sup> when the opposing minority went "to retire--shall I say it?--to smoke," this anti-

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<sup>23</sup>Conference of Librarians, October, 1876, "Proceedings," Library Journal 1 (November 1876): 140.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 117.

smoking youth made the conference adopt some other measures of his favorite reforms: abbreviations and international metric system to be common library standardized practices.<sup>26</sup> Acting like a hard driving cowboy behind the herd, Dewey provided the moving force and direction, "and so the conference drove, drove, drove for three days."

Near the end of the conference, when enough curiosity had been built up about his decimal classification, he finally described his new system in vivid details to the conference audience, and convinced them that it was the best system any library could find.<sup>27</sup>

Deeply impressed by Dewey's leadership and hard work Charles A. Cutter could not help but announce publicly:

I suppose of late years many persons have desired a meeting of librarians, but the credit of independently conceiving the idea, of expressing it with such force as to win a hearing, of talking over those of us who were incredulous or indifferent, and of bringing us together in this Convention from which we have received so much profit and enjoyment, is incontestably due to our energetic, enthusiastic, and persuasive Secretary. And more than this, he has, I understand, defrayed all the preliminary expenses of circulars, correspondence, etc. It is too much to be indebted to him for energy and money. Let us pay both as far as possible: the first by gratitude, the second in kind. I move that we tender our thanks to the Secretary for all his services; and I suggest that each member, on leaving, pay him one dollar.<sup>28</sup>

At the conclusion of the conference, Dewey led the others to sign up as members of the new Association. Full of missionary spirit, this youngest member of the conference registered as "number one -- Melvil Dewey" and paid twenty-five dollars for life membership.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-140.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>29</sup>American Library Association. Membership certificate. Melvil Dewey Papers.

The establishment of a national educational association in 1876 was a landmark for the American people as well as for the library profession, and for Dewey himself it was a personal triumph. At the age of twenty-four, he co-founded the Association, with himself as secretary for fifteen years and president twice; and the American Library Journal,<sup>30</sup> with himself as editor, adopted by the Association as its official organ and educational tool. He also brought in his reforms of efficiency and standardization to the profession, leading to a complete revolution of library tools and equipment, library process methods, and service concepts. His editorial on the conference appeared in the next issue of the new Journal was a proclamation of man's right to knowledge and the librarian's mission to diffuse it universally. For such an educational mission,

The Conference . . . proved a thorough and entire success . . . The faith and enthusiasm . . . in making the popular library a great means for the development of the people, shone throughout the proceedings . . . Of all who came there was not one who had not felt that he or she belonged to a philanthropic profession . . . A chief usefulness of the Conference was that it made public expression and confirmation of this faith, in such wise that the spirit of the hundred who were there will go out and bear fruit among the thousand or more who had awoke to the importance of their calling . . .<sup>31</sup>

Dedicated to such missionary calling to diffuse knowledge and to improve contemporary educational systems, Dewey devoted the balance of his time and energy to two other movements so dear to him throughout his life -- spelling reform and metric reform. "Within six months," he

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<sup>30</sup>The Journal was originally named American Library Journal till volume 3, no. 1, March 1878, when it also represented the Library Association of the United Kingdom, American was dropped from the title. The name Library Journal is used throughout this study for consistency.

<sup>31</sup>"Editorial," Library Journal 1 (November 1876): 90.

recalled later, "I had organized three national educational societies . . . utilizing . . . the Centennial to hold three national conventions and thus start the work."<sup>32</sup> In all three organizations (The Metric Bureau, The American Library Association, and the Spelling Reform Association), Dewey served as the secretary and editor of their publications, all without official fundings, without working staff, and without personal compensations. All three organizations shared the same office Dewey rented in Boston from 1876 to 1883. On his business card and official stationaries, he publicized that:

Besides the Economy Co. (a commercial corporation, manufacturing labor-saving devices for readers and writers) three missionary educational societies have these offices as headquarters for the U. S. The collections illustrating each work are the largest known and are free to all. Each society desires as members all friends of education and progress, and many belong to all three. . . . Each society has a SUPPLY DEPARTMENT, furnishing at low prices, often at half former rates, everything it recommends, pertaining to the Library, Metric, or Spelling Reform movements. Supported entirely by gifts and members' fees, the smallest sums are gratefully received.<sup>33</sup>

Doubtlessly he was totally exhausted in terms of finances, energy and time. His diary bore witness to his activities of the year, as he finally summed up on August 27, 1877: "More than a year since I have opened this book. The eventful year of my life. . . ."<sup>34</sup>

#### The Formation of Library Associations

In retrospect, it is pertinent to note that the American Library Association was founded in the year of the national centennary, a time

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<sup>32</sup> Melvil Dewey, The Chronicles of '74 since Graduation from Amherst College (Warren, Mass.: 1885), p. 16.

<sup>33</sup> Melvil Dewey Papers.      <sup>34</sup> Melvil Dewey Diaries, Melvil Dewey Papers

when Americans were experiencing some of the greatest changes in their history. The United States was emerging from the chaos of the Civil War and the trauma of Reconstruction. The subsequent growth in industrial power and momentum provided an accumulation of capital and general demands for social services, for scientific research, and for more public and progressive education. The passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act in 1862 provided federal subsidies for higher education for the common people; the Johns Hopkins University was founded in 1876 patterned after the German research institutes by an ex-librarian Daniel C. Gilman. More and more scholarly groups began to claim their special place in the educational sun. For example, the American Chemical Society (also founded in 1876), the Archaeological Institute of America (1879), The Modern Language Association (1883), the American Historical Association (1884), the American Economic Association (1885) were typical examples of the many learned societies dedicated to the advancement of their particular subjects. The founding of the American Library Association during this period of time was quite natural, but the A.L.A. would not materialize so early and so lively without Dewey's impetus, hard work, leadership and unshakable will power to organize and to lead.

Dewey's role in the formation of the American Library Association was well recognized. Even his adversary, the senior William F. Poole, himself a hardworking scholar and organizer, wrote to Richard R. Bowker after the conference expressing his feelings: "It is cruel to put so much work upon one person, even if he is a good fellow. Dewey is a remarkable man, and I have become much interested in him."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> William F. Poole to Richard R. Bowker, November 14, 1876, Bowker Papers, New York Public Library.

(Incidentally, both Poole and Dewey had many things in common; both were six-footers with a strong drive to success, both were irrepressible in arguments and tenacious of their own opinions and convictions, both were professionals, with a strong sense of educational mission and responsibility.) Poole and Winsor later co-founded the American Historical Association, then became presidents one after the other. Poole and Winsor were long-time friends and conservative in their outlook; they preferred their own solutions to problems in a given situation and cared little for rigid, mechanical standards and conformity among libraries.<sup>36</sup> Dewey's conflicts with the conservative leaders were thus inevitable. The formation of the Association only intensified their conflicts.

In the beginning, the purposes of the Association were simply self-serving, as its constitution so expressed:

. . . to promote the library interests of the country by exchanging views, reaching conclusions, and inducing cooperation in all departments of bibliothecal science and economy; by disposing the public mind to the founding and improving of libraries; and by cultivating good will among its own members.<sup>37</sup>

But for the ambitious Dewey, the Association should serve as the organizer of all libraries, and libraries were the ultimate institutes of public education, therefore, the Association should provide guidance and direction for the reading public as well as for the practicing librarian. Such vision of mission and goal was stated clearly by Dewey in a landmark essay in the first issue of the Library Journal.

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<sup>36</sup>Williamson, Poole and the Modern Library Movement, pp. 98-103.

<sup>37</sup>"Constitution of American Library Association," Library Notes 1 (June 1886): 12.

The best librarians are no longer men of merely negative virtues. They are positive, aggressive characters, standing in the front rank of the educators of their communities, side by side with the preachers and the teachers. The people are more and more getting their incentives and ideas from the printed page . . . and men who move and lead the world are using the press more and the platform less . . . that the largest influence over the people is the printed page, and that this influence may be wielded most surely and strongly through our libraries. . . .

And so our leading educators have come to recognize the library as sharing with the school the education of the people. The most that the schools can hope to do for the masses more than the schools are doing for them in many sections, is to teach them to read intelligently, to get ideas readily from the printed page. It may seem a strong statement, but many children leave the schools without this ability. . . . Could the schools really teach the masses to read, they would be doing a great work. The children of the lower classes have to commence work at a very early age, and it is impossible to keep them in the schools long enough to educate them to any degree. The school teaches them to read; the library must supply them with reading which shall serve to educate, and so it is that we are forced to divide popular education into two parts of almost equal importance and deserving equal attention: the free school and the free library.<sup>38</sup>

Thus Dewey defined the function of the library and classified the librarian as educator: at large, he also pointed out the direction libraries should take in the future:

Its founders have an intense faith in the future of our libraries and believe that if the best methods can be applied by the best librarians, the public may soon be brought to recognize our claim that the free library ranks with the free school. We hold that there is no work reaching farther in its influence and deserving more honor than the work which a competent and earnest librarian can do for his community.

. . . The time is when a library is a school, and the librarian is in the highest sense a teacher, and the visitor is a reader among the books as a workman among his tools. Will any man deny to the high calling of such a librarianship the title of profession?<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Melvil Dewey, "The Library Profession" Library Journal 1 (September 1876): 5.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



Responding to this educational calling to diffuse knowledge among all the people, he coined a slogan for the newly founded Association: "The education of the masses through the libraries, by securing the best reading for the largest number at the least expense."<sup>40</sup> First he put this on his stationaries, later had it adopted as the official motto of the Association. So he explained the origin of this motto:

In trying to get at the root of the matter it seems that back of all our technical discussions and study for improved methods the supreme thing was to approximate at least the best reading, to make it reach as many people, young and old, as possible, and as a corollary and necessity for efficiency with the limits we should always find in everything, to utilize the principle of cooperation to make our money go farther, first by combining to supply books for common use in public libraries, since cost makes it impracticable for each person to buy all the books he ought to read, and in the next step to increase efficiency of such libraries by adopting every labor-saving method or device that would enable us to do more with the time and money at our disposal.<sup>41</sup>

From this statement, one can see clearly a self-righteous reformer and devoted educator seeking better ways to educate the common people outside of the school system. Once what he believed to be "the best way" and "the best reading" were found, he would try his best to supply everyone "books he ought to read" and to make everyone so conform. In keeping with his zeal to save time and money, he would discover every labor-saving method or device to carry out his mission. At the dawn of American industrialism and the Progressive Education movement, such a mechanical mind and evangelical spirit were natural

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<sup>40</sup>"A.L.A." Library Journal 1 (March 1877): 247. This, or a short version, "the best reading for the largest number at the least cost," also appeared in many other official publications.

<sup>41</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Origin of A.L.A. Motto," Public Libraries 11 (February 1906): 55.

products of the time. Somewhat biased by his passion for reform and high-handed in his approach, however, Dewey was challenging the establishments and the social order. He proclaimed his position publicly:

The world gives to schools more money than to any other cause. Yet the schools have not done all we hoped from them, nor all we need to have done. We now have come to the idea that there must be a school and library system working together.

The object of the school is not the accumulation of knowledge but the development of character. Reading makes reflection; reflection makes motives; motives make actions; actions make habits; habits make character.

The broadening of ideas has showed us that higher education is not only for those who go to college, but for those who stay at home; higher education for adults at home through life.

The library is the corner-stone of all methods of home education.

If a choice were to be made between the schools and the ideal library system, I would choose the latter.<sup>42</sup>

To reach his ideal, he skillfully used the machinery of the Association, the pages of printed materials, and his associates in and out of the library profession. In the years that followed, Dewey introduced more and more standardized measurements and methods, rules and regulations for common library practices, more abbreviations and spelling reforms, and more articles and announcements promoting the international metric systems through the Library Journal and committee reports. He never gave up an opportunity to press his ideas nor would he compromise in his objective. In a report on the second library conference held in New York City in 1877, the reporter wrote that:

As in all conventions, a slight division is apparent. A party of young librarians was eager for the adoption of continental methods, for decapitalization in the French style, and uniformity of labels, indexes and calendars, to which the conservative majority

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<sup>42</sup>Melvil Dewey, "The Future of the Library in the Social System," Public Libraries 9 (July 1904): 340.

gave guarded encouragement. To hear the frank, mirthful Dewey, editor of the Librarian's Monthly [sic] or the earnest, enthusiastic young Tyler, who has stepped from the Astor Library to the head of the rich and growing Johns Hopkins at Baltimore, enlarging on the advantages of omitting all capitals possible in a catalogue of books, one was fain to look upon it as a chief earthly interest, while the emphatic Spofford, who has charge of the Congressional Library, or the deprecatory Homes of Albany, and Poole of Chicago protest against any such neo-republicanism of letters and beheading of capitals.<sup>43</sup>

Poole was specially irritated by the inventive secretary's practice in abbreviating names and words in the reports of the Association's meetings. "My name is William, not a W and a colon. My name is Frederick, not a F and a colon." Dewey, however, managed to have the Association endorse such abbreviations so that even these angry remarks were reported as having been made by "Mr. W:F: Poole."<sup>44</sup>

Later, when Dewey simplified the spelling of his name to "Dui," Poole could not help but suggested that "Dewy" would be a more accurate reflection of the young reformer's naivete. Call it naive or innovative, Dewey had little respect for conventional systems, he was too preoccupied and pragmatic to worry about cultural and social traditions.

From 1864 to 1905, he was immensely preoccupied with library work as a form of public education. Public libraries began to grow like mushrooms; academic libraries also expanded rapidly to meet the needs of new curricula and proliferating graduate programs as well as to support the developing land-grant colleges. Competent librarians were in short supply.

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<sup>43</sup>"The Librarians Convention," The World (New York), 7 September 1877, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup>American Library Association, "Proceedings," Library Journal 14 (May-June 1889): 284-285.

Recognizing the importance of supplying the nation with competent librarians, and the inadequacy of on-the-job training, he first came up with the idea of a "normal school for librarians." In 1879 in a provocative article in the Library Journal entitled "Apprenticeship of Librarians," he proposed a "librarians' college" to train professional librarians.<sup>45</sup> Apparently there was not much response and Dewey himself was not in any position to do something about the situation. Only when he became the head librarian of Columbia College in 1883 did the possibility of creating a new library school connected to a college library come within bounds. At the 1883 conference in Buffalo, New York, he presented a plan for a "librarians' normal school" and indicated that Columbia College was hopeful of trying it. He asked the chairman to appoint immediately a committee to study his proposal and draft a resolution of approval which he hoped could be adopted by the Association the following day. Some of the members present questioned the necessity of such a school as well as his request for the Association endorsement of the plan before it "had been tried. Poole protested strongly against the approach:

The scheme, however, at present, is only talked about, -- it is in the air. This Association, with the little information it has, cannot be expected at this time to express any opinion as to the practicability of the scheme. When Mr. Dewey has put it in successful operation, and has educated some librarians, the Association will be the first to endorse his methods and commend them to the public.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Apprenticeship of Librarians," Library Journal 4 (May 1879): 147-148.

<sup>46</sup>American Library Association, "Proceedings" in Library Journal 8 (September-October 1883): 289.

But the invincible tenacity of Dewey always prevailed, and a lukewarm endorsement was given to his plan during the last day of the conference. The purposeful Dewey needed the endorsement of the Association, even though it was completely noncommittal, to convince the Trustees of the Columbia College to favor his project.

For several years, under the name of the Library Supplies Committee of Supply Department of A.L.A., he tested, manufactured and sold library equipment and supplies to libraries, thereby helped setting standards and unified methods in library processing. Even today, many libraries still observe such standards and measures. Full of missionary zeal and reforming ideas, Dewey kept members of the Association busy reviewing, discussing, and eventually endorsing his organizational plans and new schemes in library work. Repelled by such constant requests for official endorsement, Poole said in the 1885 conference:

In order that a vote of the Association, as a body, may have authority, we ought to be careful as to what we are voting upon. . . . We do too much voting. I have never asked the Association to indorse by vote any of my hobbies in methods of library work. It is enough that we have an opportunity of stating our views.<sup>47</sup>

In 1889 Poole, Cutter, and Winsor united in an attempt to clip Dewey's wings by the passage of a resolution opposing the taking of votes to endorse systems, procedures, methods, or plans. Facing such a powerful coalition, the skillful Dewey managed to get the resolution referred to a committee for a later report which became lost in postponements and inaction. Exercising more and more influence through his secretaryship and committee work, through his Readers and Writers

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<sup>47</sup> American Library Association, "Proceedings," Library Journal 10 (September 1885): 309.

Economy Company -- a library equipment and office supplies venture later known as the Library Bureau; through the editorship of the Library Journal and his Library Notes -- a quarterly publication setting standards and methods in library practices; and supported by his close colleagues and students from his library schools, Dewey finally wielded so much power that he completely dominated the Association and became "librarian of the land." He was "railroaded" by his followers into the presidency of the Association in 1890 and again in 1892.

About two years after Dewey became librarian of Columbia College, he organized the local librarians and formed the New York Library Club. At his invitation, seventy-two librarians from various libraries in New York City met on June 18, 1885, in his office. After some discussion and a vote, the Club was formed and a constitution was adopted. "Its object shall be by consultation and cooperation to increase the usefulness and promote the interests of the libraries of New York and vicinity."<sup>48</sup> An early project coordinated by Dewey and edited in Columbia Library was a list of 1864 periodicals currently received in the public libraries of New York and Brooklyn. Such an union list helped inquirers to locate a specific periodical, and made it possible for libraries to share resources and save some subscription expense. As its first secretary, Dewey coordinated member librarians to help each other on common problems, and to propose the location of a central library, at 5th Avenue and 42nd Street. Later the New York Public Library was erected there as a result of the consolidation of the Astor, Tilden and Lenox foundations.

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<sup>48</sup>"Constitution of the New York Library Club," June 18, 1885, Melvil Dewey Papers.

The influence of this organization has been far-reaching. Today, many library clubs are operating in cities across the nation after New York's pattern. An identical, interesting example is the Chicago Library Club. Established by former members of the New York Library Club in 1891, its constitution reads exactly like the one initiated by Dewey six years before, for "its object is to increase by consultation and cooperation, the usefulness of the libraries of Chicago and vicinity, to promote library interests and work . . ."<sup>49</sup> It also published a union list of serials of Chicago area libraries, with triennial supplements. Leaders in library and education were invited to be guest speakers for the Club. Well known contemporary figures included such names as John Dewey from the University of Chicago, Francis W. Parker and Ella Flagg Young from Cook County Normal School, Jane Addams from the Hull House, and Melvil Dewey from New York. Melvil Dewey's talk, held in the Chicago Historical Society on October 31, 1902, was on "The Place of the Library in the Community."<sup>50</sup>

Following the pattern set up by the New York Library Club, the Chicago Library Club also sponsored home libraries, jail libraries, and school libraries.<sup>51</sup> Numerous library clubs were also formed in New England. At the meeting of the Massachusetts Library Club held in Springfield, May 28-29, 1904, an address given by Dewey envisioned "The Future of the Public Librarian."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Chicago Library Club, Libraries of the City of Chicago with a Historical Sketch of the Chicago Library Club (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1905), p. 97.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 85-87.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>52</sup>"Library Meetings -- Massachusetts." Public Libraries 9 (October 1904): 326-7.

Children's Library Association

Another library development also took place with Dewey's assistance. During the 1880's, New York's industrial and commercial development attracted many immigrants from the Old World and from the deep South, which was undergoing the Reconstruction after the Civil War. Poor children of the freed slaves, of the illiterate peasants from southeastern Europe, and of the local parents who had to work long hours to support the family were often left alone, neglected by the community, unattended after school, and unwelcome by public libraries. Traditionally all public libraries had a certain age requirement for admission, generally for the benefits of the adult. Some libraries admitted children above sixteen years' of age; others made it fourteen. A few even accepted twelve years' of age, but provisions for children's rooms and reading materials were lacking.

Outside of school textbooks, children were either reading books harmful, tasteless, or they were totally without access to reading material. Since 1885, Miss Emily S. Hanaway, principal of the primary department of a grammar school in New York City, had been trying to provide some suitable materials for the poor children in a day nursery opposite the school but without much success due to the lack of financial support, adequate space and a trained librarian.<sup>53</sup>

At a public meeting held in Columbia College in 1887, Dewey became interested in the project and he strongly

urged that the work should be broadened to meet the growing interest; that many people would gladly give more if asked for

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<sup>53</sup>Emily S. Hanaway, "The Children's Library in New York," Library Journal 20 (May 1887): 185-186.



more; that the field was so great that we were in duty bound to cover more of it; that a new constitution and plan of campaign should be made, and that the C.L.A. should be regularly incorporated and put in a position to receive gifts or bequests. As a result a special committee held a series of meetings in Mr. Dewey's office, and the constitution . . . finally adopted by the Association.<sup>54</sup>

The constitution of the Association stated that:

Its object shall be to create and foster among children too young to be admitted to the public libraries, a taste for wholesome reading. To this end it will secure . . . the circulation of printed matter, the cooperation of schools, teachers, and parents, and chiefly, so far as its means will allow, it will supply the children, for use both at home and in free libraries and reading-rooms, with the books and serials best adapted to profit them and to prepare them for the wisest use of the public libraries.<sup>55</sup>

To place the library on a purely unsectarian basis, the books were inspected by a supervising committee of accredited representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, and the Hebrew faiths.<sup>56</sup>

Through the negotiation by Dewey, a special room in the new George Bruce Branch of the New York Circulating Library was given to the Association. All the workers gave their services free, including voluntary student assistants from Columbia's new Library School. It was noted that the library was daily visited by more children than the room could hold, and it was not uncommon to see a long line of children waiting on the sidewalk, eager to slip in as fast as others came out. The library was closed due to overcrowding. It was moved to another location after a while, and then relocated to another place. As a crusade to open doors of public libraries to children under twelve and to introduce good reading to the formative minds, this experiment was an

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<sup>54</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Children's Library Association," Library Notes 1 (March 1887): 262.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

instant success. There were requests from various parts of the city calling for the opening of libraries and reading-rooms for children. Trustees of the New York Free Circulating Library became interested and began to plan suitable rooms for children in new buildings. The Columbia Library became the headquarters for such a movement and held regular business meetings "in reading-room No. 4 where also meet the New York Library Club and the National Sunday School Union."<sup>57</sup> According to a statement by Dewey:

The C.L.A. has no desire to do work that others can be found to undertake, and as fast as other libraries remove the age qualification or provide the special rooms for children, the trustees will move on to another of the hundreds of centers where a great work is waiting to be done for the little ones. Librarians have more than the philanthropic and educational interest in this good work. It is the training school for the public libraries, and much of the success of the older institutions depends on the constituency that is constantly growing up to enter the people's university.<sup>58</sup>

For Dewey, a free library was "the people's university," and a children's library would be the preparatory school for the underprivileged. The effort of the Association was not just an experiment; their members believed that "it appeals strongly to all the better classes, and . . . that many other cities and towns will profit by New York's good example."<sup>59</sup>

Gradually New York's good example was followed in other cities and towns until the children's department in all public libraries in the United States had become a very basic and non-sectarian educational facility for the little citizens, supported by the public and served by specialized librarians. While special library services for children are

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

taken for granted in the United States, many foreign countries still lack such educational facilities for children.

Ranging from national to local organizations, from general to special library services, all these improvements and reforms were achieved in the latter part of the nineteenth century. As a promoter of public education outside of the brick red schoolhouse, Dewey moved on further and further into other areas of improvement and innovations, especially in libraries, in simplified spelling, in the adoption of the metric system and in many other reforms for educational efficiency. As secretary of the Spelling Reform Association, he worked diligently with the President of the organization, F. A. March, the eminent philologist and president of the Philological Association, ex-president of Lafayette College, Pennsylvania; as Secretary of the American Metric Bureau, he worked closely with Frederick P. A. Barnard, president of the Bureau and also president of Columbia College, New York. In each of these organization, they gathered around them an impressive long list of eminent scholars and educational reformers who shared a common interest in their field, with Dewey doing the yeoman's work faithfully and remarkably.

#### The School of Library Economy at Columbia College

In early 1883, when a new library building was under construction, the Trustees of Columbia College decided to centralize the separate divisional libraries into a general university library, Dewey was invited by President Barnard to confer with the Committee of the Library on reorganization and management of the new library. Dewey's presentation so impressed the Committee that he was asked to accept the position as the head librarian of the College, to replace the super-

annuated Rev. Beverley Robinson Betts. At the same time, the Committee also received recommendations to appoint Dewey from eminent librarians and influential people who had known Dewey, such as President Barnard, Professors John Burgess and John Clark, both had come from Amherst College and witnessed the pioneering reforms Dewey had introduced into the library at Amherst.

Doubtlessly Dewey had built up his reputation as a national leader in the library field when he was approached by Columbia. He was also the owner of the Library Bureau, a successful business firm with a prosperous future not just limited to library equipment and supplies. His major interest and ambition, however, was popular education through libraries, and he was hoping that somehow he could establish a formal library school breaking away from the traditional apprenticeship system. The forming of a library college was, in that age and state of the art, an unpopular and unprofitable revolutionary idea which embodied many undesirable elements to his contemporaries. For the practicing librarians, a formal school would seem pedantic, unrealistic, and potentially threatening to their occupation; for the Trustees of Columbia College, such an unorthodox new school, without a specific curriculum and admission standards, but which promised to bring women students into the all-male campus, could hardly meet with their approval; to the conservative officers and scholars of Columbia, such an occupational school, managed by the controversial Dewey and some unknown librarians, did not appear to be an honorable addition to their academe at all.

All this opposition and apparent hostility did not seem to bother Dewey. After all, he was battling for a principle and an edu-

cational mission, and the determination of Dewey was unconquerable. He accepted the position as the chief librarian of Columbia College on May 7, 1883, with a preconceived plan to start a library school "connected with [a] large library and with [an] university" having the power to grant certificates or degrees. Apparently Dewey had discussed his plan with his good friend Barnard. Barnard was sold on the idea, for he proposed to the Trustees in his annual report that they should open a school for the training of librarians.<sup>60</sup> The reasons and plan advanced were the ones which Dewey had supplied and published himself four years before.<sup>61</sup>

To obtain a noncommittal endorsement from the American Library Association was relatively easy compared to the troubles Dewey experienced in getting the approval from the Trustees of Columbia. It took the Trustees' Committee on the Library a whole year to issue a favorable report. Even then the resolutions passed on May 5, 1884 by the Committee specified that:

As it is desirable, before entering upon active operations, to mature very carefully the scheme of instruction to be given, to effect definite arrangements with the men on whose cooperation we must rely in carrying the scheme into effect, and to give such public and extensive notice of the design that those who may desire to secure the advantages of such instruction may be enabled to make their necessary preliminary preparations, the Committee are of opinion that the opening of the school should not take place earlier than October 1st, 1886.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Frederick Barnard, A School of Library Economy, proposed in Connection with the Columbia College Libraries; an Extract from the Annual Report of F. A. P. Barnard, President of Columbia College, Made to the Trustees May 7, 1883. (New York: Columbia College, 1883), pp. 1-8.

<sup>61</sup> Melvil Dewey, "Apprenticeship of Librarians," Library Journal 4 (May 1879): 147-148.

<sup>62</sup> Melvil Dewey, Columbia College Library, School of Library Economy. Circular of Information, 1884 (New York: Columbia College, 1884), p. 24.

The reason behind this period of two and one-half years' preparation was not just to allow for careful arrangements of instruction and extensive public notice of the plan, it was also to allow Dewey to reconsider or react to the other specification made by the Trustees; namely, that their support was based upon the premise that the enterprise would "involve no charge upon the treasury but on the other hand [might] prove an actual source of income."<sup>63</sup>

Not a bit discouraged, Dewey immediately printed and sent out more Circular of Information announcements which gave the plans of the new school. Meanwhile, two rehearsals or preliminary classes for library assistants were conducted in order to provide some practical experience for the instructors as well as for the new library assistants, most of whom were college women. To establish a new school without classroom space and equipment, without adequate personnel support and without any official funding, Dewey had to seek all possible ways to maximize its limited resources to achieve impressive results. His inclination to employ women as staff members and to recruit women as students was an unconventional but effective way to build the school. At the time when career opportunities for educated women were very limited, graduates from liberal arts women's colleges were willing to pay the tuition, to work in the library as trainees without pay, and to perform the same duties most men would not do for less money. It is said that

Dr. Barnard was in the habit of dropping in at the library almost every afternoon, where he visited with Dewey and observed the various library staff members at their assigned tasks. The staff

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<sup>63</sup>Columbia College, Minutes of the Trustees meeting of 5 May, 1884.

for the most part was made up of women, something of a rarity on the Columbia campus at that time. Both Dewey and Barnard seemed to enjoy an atmosphere graced by the presence of young women, especially when they were attractive and intelligent.<sup>64</sup>

In a recruiting address delivered by Dewey before the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, on the topic of "Librarianship as a Profession for College-bred Women," he illustrated the educational function of the library and the attractions and opportunities for women in library work:

The school STARTS the education in childhood; we have come to a point where in some way we must carry it on. The simplest figure cannot be bounded by less than three lines; the lightest table cannot be firmly supported by less than a tripod. No more can the triangle of great educational work now well begun be complete without the church as a basis, the school as one side, the library as the other.<sup>65</sup>

Then he went on to talk about the library profession and library employment:

So library work offers to you two fields analogous to the work of the public school teacher and the college professor. Many libraries largely combine these functions. The types would however be, for the one, the college library or the reference library for the use of scholars; for the other, the popular circulating library among the people where the librarian is in hourly contact with her constituency of readers, advising, helping and elevating their lives and exerting a far-reaching influence for good not to be exceeded in any profession open to women or to men.

Both the Scholars' and the People's Libraries offer to women both employment and a profession. . . .

And he concluded by saying that:

In fact there is hardly any occupation that is so free from annoying surroundings or that has so much in the character of the work and of the people which is grateful to a refined and educated woman.

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<sup>64</sup>Ray Trautman, A History of the School of Library Service, Columbia University (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), pp. 11-12.

<sup>65</sup>The extract of the address made on March 13, 1886 was reprinted with several subtitles in the Library Notes. This is quoted in "The Educational Trinity," Library Notes 1 (June 1886): 44-45.

Compare this work with that of the clergyman or teacher, whose fields of usefulness are universally put in the first rank: The clergyman has before him for one or two hours per week perhaps one-tenth or one-twentieth of the people in his parish. . . . Beyond this very limited number for this very very limited time the clergyman is dependent on the slow process of personal parochial calls. . . .

The teacher has a larger proportion of her constituency in the earlier years, but only for a few hours a day and only in the months when schools are in session. . . . For the great majority the work of education is hardly begun before the necessities of life take them away from the teacher's influence.

But the earnest librarian may have for a congregation almost the entire community, regardless of denomination or political party. Her services are continuous and in the wide reaching influences of the library there is no vacation. . . .

Is it not true that the ideal librarian fills a pulpit where there is service every day during all the waking hours, with a large proportion of the community frequently in the congregation? Has she not a school in which the classes graduate only with death?<sup>66</sup>

Dewey's special efforts to attract women to Columbia were apparent and effective, but his publicity in their behalf also attracted the attention, and thus the antagonism, of the Trustees of Columbia, as evidenced by the following letter from President Barnard shortly before the opening of the school:

"Dec. 12, 1886

"My dear Dewey:

"Mr. Silliman has turned up in a new phase of opposition. He took the ground, yesterday, that the admission of women to the School of Library Economy would be contrary to the expressed wish of the Board of Trustees. I denied this; but he is bent on forcing this question; and if (as he will) he brings it before the Board at the next meeting the School is probably ruined. Should the proposition to exclude women prevail, my opinion is that the resolution establishing the school had better be repealed; and that notice thereto now be given immediately to applicants of this probable result. We must give the public such an account of this change of front as we can. In the end it will probably lead to a re-establishment of the School on a better basis than it has at present.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53.



"There seems to be no general interest in the School among the Trustees and some, I think, disapprove it. Let them have their way for the time being.

"Yours truly,

"F. A. P. Barnard"<sup>67</sup>

Confronted by such a clearly "expressed wish" from one's direct and indirect superiors, any person would give up or wait for a more favorable time, but not Dewey. Burning with missionary zeal and ambition, he had been planning for the School for four years, now that the opening of the School was in sight, he would not compromise and "let them have their way." In fact he had been encountering many other difficulties, inside and outside of Columbia College, over the establishment of the School. His superiors had made it clear that "instruction in the school should be given by members of the library staff in addition to their ordinary duties" and "that the school should be conducted in the library building with such accommodation as could be found there."<sup>68</sup> The extra burden of administering a new library and preparing for a new school had almost made his colleagues give up both duties, the accommodation problem had made him nervous. The following letter to a friend, Dr. Agnew, shortly before the opening of the school revealed his anxiety:

18 N., 1886

"Dear Dr. Agnew:

"I need your advice for ten minutes very much. The Pres't may have written you already. We are in serious trouble if the "Trustees" do not grant the extra room we need . . . .

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<sup>67</sup>Quoted in Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 187.

<sup>68</sup>Columbia University, School of Library Service, School of Library Economy of Columbia College, 1887-1889, Documents for a History (New York: The School, 1937), pp. 214-215.

"We feel it will surely be granted if the "Trustees realize the facts" and two or three have told me that if Dr. Agnew would look it over he could do more than any one else for us. It is very important. You ought to see the things needed on the spot, but if you can't come up here may I run down and show you plans? . . .

"I also need you either as trustee or oculist. The cross light in my office I guess are the trouble but my only good eye has nervous twitchings of the under lid that I take as a warning.

"Sincerely,

"Melvil Dewey"<sup>69</sup>

Warnings and opposition meant very little to the pre-determined Dewey. Once he set his mind on something which he believed was right for the people, he would carry it on, in defiance of authorities and traditions, risking personal and professional losses. In a letter written in 1916, Dewey thus describes the agonies and triumphs in his rebellion against Columbia:

There were strong reasons for remembering January 5, 1887, for it marked one of the sharpest battles of my life for what I knew to be right. . . Twenty-four hours before I was to meet the first class I was formally notified by the chairman of the committee on buildings, and representing the trustees, that I would not be allowed any room in Columbia for my new school because the first class, like all that have succeeded it, proved, as I always expected, to have more women than men. The crisis sent President Barnard home ill, for he saw no escape from what seemed a final wrecking of my plans. It took the faith, not of a mustard seed, but of a whole mustard plaster, but I never for a moment faltered in my faith that the Library School would be born and live and grow. They assured me that I could not and should not. Dr. Barnard tried all the afternoon, with all his powers as president, and finally gave it up as impossible, and ill with mortification, sent for his physician.

I sent for the janitors, told them, as I did the first class when they arrived, that there were twenty when I only hoped for ten, and that I could find no room large enough and so must utilize the store room over the chapel, thus inspiring them with a little enthusiasm for meeting emergencies. They moved out the packing boxes,

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<sup>69</sup> Melvil Dewey to Dr. Agnew, November 18, 1886, Manuscripts and History Collection, Cultural Education Center, Albany, New York.

cleaned and scraped, ran in temporary wires, got some broken down tables and nailed on missing legs, picked up odd chairs where we could get them without encountering the police, sent a truck for some more to my house in New York, and with smiling face, without giving a hint of the volcano on which we all stood, I welcomed the first class and launched the first library school. Later the enemies of women in Columbia planned my Waterloo, and appointed a Committee, with Mayor Seth Low of Brooklyn as chairman, to report whether I should be expelled from the University for admitting women to its instruction.<sup>70</sup>

While some details of such reminiscence of a self-righteous reformer were open to question, it was true that the Statutes of the College forbade the admission of women.

President Barnard, knowing the tradition, but willing to support his friend in such educational reform, was reminded of a new ruling passed on May 2, 1887 by the Trustees, as thus recorded in the Statutes of Columbia College: "No woman shall be admitted as a student in any department of the College, other than the Collegiate Course for Women, except by special order of the Trustees."<sup>71</sup> In May, 1888, President Barnard submitted his resignation to the Trustees for reason of ill health. A Special Committee on Dismissal was formed to investigate Dewey's unorthodox doings, including his "boastful" library reports, his simplified spellings, the unauthorized printing done for him by the Library Bureau, the improper questions on the application form for students seeking admission to the school, and his bad personal relations with powerful members of the faculty in his drive to centralize all departmental collections and enforce new library regulations.

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Dawe, Melvil Dewey, pp. 189-190.

<sup>71</sup> Statutes of Columbia College, ch. 5, art. 6, cited by Trautman, A History of the School of Library Service, p. 19.

Seth Low, chairman of the Committee, and later to succeed Barnard as president, was a good friend of Dewey. He managed to revoke the suspension and dismissed some of the charges against Dewey. The library school was kept open until Dewey decided months later to accept the position as secretary of the University of the State of New York and had the school transferred to Albany.<sup>72</sup>

### The New York State Library School

Dewey became Secretary, Treasurer, and Chief Executive Officer of the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York and Director of the New York State Library on January 1, 1889. He also secured the approval for the transfer of the staff, students, and materials from the School of Library Economy at Columbia to Albany, the capital of the State of New York. The degrees of Bachelor of Library Science, Master of Library Science, and the honorary degree Doctor of Library Science were established. The first Master of Library Science was awarded to James Ingersoll Wyer in June, 1906. However, no record of a doctoral degree recipient was found in the history of the school.

The curriculum of the Albany school in the early years was basically the same as it had been at Columbia, except that more apprentice work was required in the State Library. Dewey agreed with the Board, as he had agreed earlier at Columbia, that library students should provide service to the library without any salary in exchange for library instruction and guidance. There was plenty of work in the

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<sup>72</sup>Letters between F. P. A. Barnard and Seth Low regarding the case of Dewey are in Appendix B and Appendix C.

State Library due to Dewey's ambitious plans to expand library services to the people. To what extent Dewey's questionable maneuver might have motivated the Board to approve his total program is debatable, but it is obvious that both the Board and Dewey were happy in their arrangement. As a result, the State Library expanded remarkably during these years.

At the San Francisco Conference of the American Library Association in 1891, a report of the Standing Committee of Three listed ten achievements of Dewey's Library School, such as:

It offers the aspirants for library honors the same opportunities granted the lawyer, the doctor, the minister, each in his chosen profession. . . .

The course of training gives the pupils an insight into the most approved methods of management and systems of classification adopted by the larger libraries in the country; and by occasional visits to the library centres they are enabled to see how the work is carried on. An so when the graduates go forth they are not wedded to one particular theory, but are prepared to grasp any. . . . new ideas might be brought in, fresh inspiration infused into the old soldiers, and a higher standard set for their emulation. . . .

It keeps librarians and assistants on their mettle all the time. They don't want the school to get ahead of them. One good Library School girl will put more snap into a staff than any amount of scolding, flattery, or A.L.A. conference. . . .

It teaches trustees and the public to have greater respect for the calling of a librarian. . . .

It shows trustees where they can find competent employees. . . .

Finally: Every graduate is a living example of the usefulness of the Library School.<sup>73</sup>

To show its objectivity, the Committee also added:

A few words in the way of criticism: if anything, the entrance examinations are too severe. . . .

The pupils should not be rushed. It were better to lengthen the course and not to make them think they can learn everything in two years. . . .

It is a mistake that the name of the school should be confined to a single State: . . . drop the words New York State from the title, and let it be known as "The Library School."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>American Library Association, "Proceedings, 1891," Library Journal 16 (December, 1891): 86.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

Thus, after a struggle of almost twenty years with the centuries old apprentice system and conservatism, Dewey was assured that education for librarianship had finally become institutionalized. "The Library School" was warmly accepted by the American Library Association; and, besides the Dewey Decimal Classification, his other publications, such as the quarterly Library Notes, The Library School Rules series,<sup>75</sup> the American Library Association Catalog<sup>76</sup> of 8,000 annotated popular books for libraries, later known as "Dewey's Flying Machine,"<sup>77</sup> as well as his Papers Prepared for the World's Library Congress,<sup>78</sup> all became standard textbooks for library schools, with abridged or revised editions meeting the needs of various institutions and libraries. Through these books and schools, his theories and practices in library service became the credo and sine qua non of American librarianship for many decades.

In 1902, the Library School decided to restrict admission to the regular two-year course to graduates of colleges and universities registered in the New York State University. Since there were more applications for admission than the School could possibly accommodate, Dewey and his faculty accepted only the most promising persons who

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<sup>75</sup>Melvil Dewey, Library School Rules (Boston: Library Bureau, 1890).

<sup>76</sup>Melvil Dewey, ed., American Library Association Catalog (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904).

<sup>77</sup>Russell E. Bidlack, "The Coming Catalogue or Melvil Dewey's Flying Machine: Being the Historical Background of the A.L.A. Catalog," Library Quarterly 27 (July 1957): 137-160.

<sup>78</sup>Melvil Dewey, ed., Papers Prepared for the World's Library Congress Held at the Columbian Exposition, 1893 (Washington: U.S. Bureau of Education, 1896).

wanted to excel in the profession. The reputation of the School developed widely and strongly. By the time it was transferred back to Columbia in 1926, the School had enrolled 1,992 students, and from this group came a great many library and educational leaders who were responsible for the growth of American librarianship. Numerous library schools were founded subsequently by Dewey's students. Some outstanding examples were: (1) The Pratt Institute Library School, founded in 1890 by Mary Wright Plummer, graduate of the first class of the School of Library Economy at Columbia in 1888;<sup>79</sup> (2) Drexel Institute library program, established by Alice B. Kroeger and Bessie Macky in 1892, both graduates of the Albany School;<sup>80</sup> (3) Armour Institute library program, in Chicago, organized by Katharine Lucinda Sharp in 1893;<sup>81</sup> (4) The Summer Program in Wisconsin, connected with the Wisconsin State University, first conducted by Miss Sharp and later developed into a regular library school;<sup>82</sup> (5) The University of Chicago, first extension program in library economy, initiated and lectured by Katharine Sharp in 1896;<sup>83</sup> (6) The University of Illinois, School of Library Science, created by Katharine Sharp in 1897;<sup>84</sup> (7) The Carnegie Library at Pittsburgh, a formal two years college program, started in 1900 by Edwin H. Anderson, Head of the Library, and Frances J. Olcott, both graduates

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<sup>79</sup>Sarah K. Vann, Training for Librarianship before 1923 (Chicago: American Library Association, 1961), p. 64.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>81</sup>Laurel A. Grotzinger, The Power and the Dignity: Librarianship and Katharine Sharp (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1966), pp. 59-78.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 73-77.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., pp. 220-224.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-85; 108-139.

of the Albany School, for the training of children's librarians;<sup>85</sup>  
 (8) The New York Public Library, with a gift from Andrew Carnegie, Library School formed by Mary W. Plummer and Edwin H. Anderson in 1911;<sup>86</sup>  
 (9) Simmons College, a library program, established by Mary E. Robbins in 1902;<sup>87</sup> and (10) Western Reserve University, the School of Library Science, formed by Alice S. Tyler in 1913 through a grant from Andrew Carnegie.<sup>88</sup>

Most of these library programs followed the curriculum and instruction established by Dewey, for their founders and instructors were faithful followers of their original teacher, and most of them still received encouragement and advice from Dewey in their process of founding new library schools. Many of these library schools and programs sustained the tests of social, educational changes and emerged as the modern graduate schools of library science in the contemporary university.

Besides dominating the education of professional librarians, graduates of Dewey's library schools also became heads or directors of libraries, presidents and secretaries of the American Library Association, state and local library associations, authors of books and compilers of bibliographies. The educational contributions and influence of the thousands of pioneer librarians whom he and his colleagues

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<sup>85</sup>Vann, Training for Librarianship, pp. 75-76.

<sup>86</sup>Trautman, School of Library Service, pp. 31-33.

<sup>87</sup>Mary Robbins, "Simmons College," Public Libraries 8 (December, 1903): 482.

<sup>88</sup>Vann, Training for Librarianship, pp. 118-120.



trained can never be accurately calculated; for the pattern of education he established, the methods and systems he invented and taught, and the aspiration and goals he passed on to generation after generation have taken root and grown in many fields and numerous countries. Thus, in accordance with his boyish dedication, he doubtlessly did multiply himself a thousand-fold. Little wonder that when he reminisced about the movements he and his colleagues had led, none gave him "serener satisfaction" than the School. When he was offered positions in other universities, the correspondence always included the negotiation of establishing a new library school.<sup>89</sup>

Since this dissertation aims to be a critical study of his contributions to education reform rather than the training activities and academic programs of his School and subsequent library schools, the author will not dwell at length on these special topics. Excellent books and dissertations can be found on the history and development of the education of librarians, including various programs, discussion of curricula and methods, comparison and criticism of each school and each developmental period since the opening of the first library school.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> See Appendix D, a letter marked "Confidential" from Dewey to the Chancellor of the University of the State of New York, January 23, 1892. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>90</sup> Primary sources and detailed studies can be found in Library Journal, Library Notes, and official publications of each school during these periods, also in the following outstanding books: Columbia University, School of Library Science, School of Library Economy of Columbia College, 1887-1889, Documents for a History; Charles Clarence Williamson, The Williamson Reports of 1921 and 1923; including Training for Library Work (1921) and Training for Library Service (1923) (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1971); Vann, Training for Librarianship before 1923; Trautman, A History of the School of Library Service: Columbia University; James I. Wyer, The First Quarter Century of the New York State Library School, 1887-1912 (Albany, N.Y.: Education Department, State of New York, 1912).

Around the turn of the century, as the expanding public, academic, and special libraries demanded more and more trained librarians, library schools thrived rapidly all over the country. Dewey and his Albany colleagues found that their monopolized field was invaded, their training methods and practice challenged and criticized. To defend his territory, Dewey publicly complained about the "library schools of doubtful value,"

where the sole instruction offered was by persons with no established reputation for either skill or wisdom. The fact that some of them had taken a partial course in some library school, and, perhaps from lack of fitness for the work, had not been allowed to continue, only aggravates the offense against the profession. . . .<sup>91</sup>

With an eye to remedy against the corrosion and abuse, he was the first educator of librarians to propose that

either an association composed of a few properly equipped schools, or else committees representing the American Library Association, may have to protect themselves against these pretentious announcements by some form of recognition for instruction that is worthy of the name, so that the public may know whether the courses offered deserve their confidence.<sup>92</sup>

Various proposals by library educators had been made and different committees had been created in the American Library Association to enforce standards and evaluate library training programs, but the Association was too weak, and the contemporary social, economical conditions were not favorable enough to support such rigid, professional standards. Consequently, the best Dewey could do to elevate the profession was to write more articles about the "abuse of [the] name,

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<sup>91</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Library Schools of Doubtful Value" Public Libraries 7 (March, 1902): 119.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

Library School,"<sup>93</sup> on "steps in developing well-trained librarians,"<sup>94</sup> on "salaries of librarians,"<sup>95</sup> on the "rank of university librarians,"<sup>96</sup> and on using other approaches to promote the socio-economic position of librarians. He hoped that standards of professional preparation would be improved subsequently by the rule of market supply and demand.

One of the alternate approaches used by Dewey to promote the nation's education for librarianship was a proposal to establish a National Library Institute, and that

the Institute should include the distinctly national library school with full and summer courses, and also instruction by correspondence, institutes, and addresses.<sup>97</sup>

The absence of any discussion or reaction of the time reflected the passive interest of the library school teachers and the Association's dim view on this proposal. Whether such a proposal was realistic would be a subject of academic debate, but the obvious argument from silence persuaded Dewey to use other schemes to approach this matter. Months later, therefore, Dewey brought up the topic of library institutes during the Lake Placid Conference of the New York State Library Association, which he founded in 1890 and had the annual conference week

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<sup>93</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Abuse of [the] name, Library School," Public Libraries 8 (July, 1903): 322.

<sup>94</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Steps in Developing Well-trained Librarians," Public Libraries 8 (July, 1903): 322.

<sup>95</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Salaries of Librarians," Public Libraries 8 (July, 1903): 323-324.

<sup>96</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Rank of University Librarians," Public Libraries 4 (March, 1899): 106.

<sup>97</sup>Melvil Dewey, "National Library Institute," Public Libraries 9 (January, 1904): 17.

held in Lake Placid successively. Still the idea of an institute did not interest participants, and Dewey insisted:

I do not believe in giving this work up, but I believe in looking it squarely in the face. My suggestion is that we make an earnest effort to get other states interested and combine and pay a salary of, say, \$5000 a year, to a man who is able to conduct institutes. If ten states combined, it would only make \$500 a year each.<sup>98</sup>

After some more frustrating dialogue, however, "the matter was finally left in the hands of the executive board and the institute committee with power to act."<sup>99</sup>

Believing in the parallel development and close cooperation between library and school, Dewey was instrumental in the organization of the Library Department of the National Education Association, which was formed in 1896 to assist the training of school librarians and coordinating the operations of school libraries.<sup>100</sup> As Dewey announced with pride on the related subject of the development of library and school systems in 1904:

We are following step by step in a score of lines the path of American public school system. We have developed state aid, commissions, training schools, inspection, local, state, and national associations and various other features exactly analogous to the school organization.<sup>101</sup>

For the purposeful Dewey, however, this analogy was just the overture of his plan to reform the over-grown A.L.A. He wanted

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<sup>98</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Library Institutes," Public Libraries 9 (November, 1904): 458.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Melvil Dewey, "New Library Development of the National Education Association," Public Libraries 1 (1896): 183.

<sup>101</sup>Melvil Dewey, "American Library Academy," Public Libraries 9 (May, 1904): 238.

an American library league, or academy inside the A.L.A. structure, with himself and a selected group of library leaders as members, because, as he pointed out:

It is well known that the N.E.A. department of superintendence with its much smaller number is a better working body and more profitable for discussions than the great conventions of the whole session. . . . The proposed academy would be ideal for this important work. . . . and the one hundred strongest men and women in the library world would come to know each other better and by comparison of views and discussion of vital questions would render a service to the cause which could not be secured in any other way.<sup>102</sup>

His proposal was submitted to the council of the A.L.A. for consideration. At the 1905 national conference in Portland, Oregon, "the proposed library senate under the name American Library Institute"<sup>103</sup> was approved and Dewey was elected president. Forty-four fellows, including the fifteen ex-presidents of the A.L.A., members of the executive board and council of the A.L.A., and "persons chosen from English-speaking America as likely to contribute most to library progress"<sup>104</sup> were elected. The fellowship list of 1906 practically consisted of every eminent library educator and administrator in the United States at that time.

Unfortunately, following the creation of the Institute, Dewey was forced to resign from his position as New York State Librarian and Director of the Library School at Albany, officially ending his active career in library management and administration on September 21, 1905.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> "American Library Institute," Public Libraries 11 (March, 1906): 108.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

The newly formed Institute hence lost its impetus and leadership. Despite Dewey's subsequent efforts to bring together its fellows for meetings at his Lake Placid Club, New York, one could only say that "the Institute has been of more or less interest and importance in the score of years succeeding."<sup>105</sup> Basically social and fraternal, there was not much solid contribution made as an organization.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>"American Library Institute," Public Libraries 11 (July, 1906): 371.

<sup>106</sup>"American Library Institute," Library Journal 30 (September, 1923): 179.

## CHAPTER IV

### SPELLING REFORM AND METRIC EDUCATION

Dewey spent about thirty years of his busy life in reforming libraries and librarianship and achieved unparalleled success. Ironically, he devoted nearly sixty years of constant efforts fighting bitterly for spelling reform and metric conversion. This was a heavy cost of time, money and friendship which handicapped him in all sorts of ways. Yet, when he died in 1931, the spelling reform movement also died with him; neither was metrication for American carried ahead by his efforts. In retrospect, the real merit of his two quixotical crusades should be appraised by the results: simplification of learning for the public and the practical value of his work for the future generations of Americans.

A whole century has past since Dewey organized the Metric Bureau in 1876 to promote the decimal system; schools all over America have only currently embarked on programs to teach children metric concepts. As for the controversial spelling reform movement, this country may have to wait for another Melvil Dewey to start the trend, but then no one can assume that a future reformer will achieve any more than Dewey. Since spelling reform is such a vast and difficult subject, it is doubtful that an individual, an association, or even the government of the United States can possibly obtain any significant improvement.

### Spelling Reform

It is often asserted that the only thing that keeps us from reforming our spelling and going over to a simpler system is the dead hand of tradition, or, to put it another way, our national perversity. Clark, for example, states: "English-speaking peoples, particularly Americans, take a perverted pride in the intricate and mysterious anomalies of the spelling of their language; it makes them feel superior to foreigners."<sup>1</sup>

Spelling reform is not unusual in other countries. The Turks switched from Arabic to Roman alphabet in a short time, the Koreans dropped the Chinese ideographs for a national system of simpler characters, the Russians revised their Cyrillic spelling very effectively, the Portuguese and Norwegian also went through periodic spelling revisions, and the People's Republic of China, with its 800 million population, just went through a drastic simplification of the traditional written language. Yet, in the United States today, spelling reform is a forgotten, or, an untouchable subject for educators and scholars.

There is one dominant, practical reason for a reform of our orthography, and it is this -- the immense waste of time and effort involved in learning the present irregular spelling. It is the generation of children to whom we appeal to us to save them from the affliction which we have endured and forgotten. It has been calculated over and over again how many years are, on an average, thrown away in the education of every child, in memorizing that intricate tangle of rules and exceptions which constitutes English so-called orthography, and how many millions of money are wasted in the process on each generation; and it has been pointed out how imperfect is the result reached; how many learners never get out of the stage of trying to learn to spell; how much more generally the first step in education, reading, could be successfully taken, if we had a purely phonetic way of writing. How many grow puzzle-headed over this dreadful difficulty at the outset, and lose courage and inclination to go further, perhaps even teachers do not fully realize. . . .<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mario Pei, The Story of the English Language (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1967), pp. 344-345.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Melvil Dewey, "English Spelling Condemned," Library Notes 2 (September 1887): 157.



Thus stated William Dwight Whitney, professor of comparative philology at Yale and first president of the American Philological Association (founded 1869). Nineteenth century American teachers did realize the necessity of a spelling reform; however, it was the lack of an organized movement and the conservatism among them that prevented the adoption of a simplified spelling. Zalmon Richards, the first president of the National Teachers' Association (founded 1857, renamed National Educational Association in 1871) was himself an ardent advocate of a simplified alphabet and phonetic spelling, but he did not carry the torch too far during his days.

Historically, the natural development of the English language and its steps to revise spelling reflect the changes of the times. A brief review of each period of English literature will reveal the constant and drastic changes that took place. Only when the publication of the King James version of The Bible appeared in 1611 did a trend begin to slow down the revision. Later Samuel Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language<sup>3</sup> further established a fixed, authoritative pattern of spelling; thus, generation after generation of conservative Englishmen followed this version of their written language as a symbol of achievement. Henceforth, attempts to improve spelling to accompany a growing language had been suppressed by faithful educators and an elite class. Over the centuries, however, conscious and deliberate efforts to reform English spelling emerged periodically. Perhaps the most notable contribution was made by Sir Isaac Pitman, through his Steno-

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language (London: J. & P. Knapton, 1755).

graphic Soundhand System, his Fonografic Journal and Fonotipic Journal. As reported by his biographer Baker, from 1843 until Pitman's death in 1897,

. . . he regarded his system of shorthand chiefly as an introduction to spelling reform; and to the advocacy of a phonetic notation, he devoted the strenuous efforts of a lifetime and his own means without stint, while he had also the moral and pecuniary support of a large number of adherents in all parts of the country.<sup>4</sup>

It is worth noting that Sir James Pitman, grandson of Sir Isaac, created the Initial Teaching Alphabet in 1962, with the formal support and approval of the British Ministry of Education, the Ford Foundation and the Fund for the Advancement of Education as well as the Grant Foundation. He achieved significant results in helping beginners learn to read and spell.<sup>5</sup> Ironically, in promoting the initial teaching medium, sponsors of ITA were postponing the more worthy plan of reforming English spelling.

In the United States, an early notable effort was recorded in Benjamin Franklin's "A Scheme for a New Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling,"<sup>6</sup> first written in 1768, then attached as an appendix in Noah Webster's Dissertation on the English Language. In the same work also appeared Webster's "An Essay on the Necessity, Advantages and Practicability of Reforming the Mode of Spelling, and of Rendering the Orthog-

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<sup>4</sup> Alfred Baker, The Life of Sir Isaac Pitman (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1913), p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Simeon Potter, Changing English (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969), pp. 49-52.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Franklin, "A Scheme for a New Alphabet and a Reformed Mode of Spelling," in Dissertation on the English Language, by Noah Webster (Boston: Isaiah Thomas, 1789; reprint ed., Menston, England: The Scolar Press, 1967), pp. 407-410.

raphy of Words Correspondent to the Pronunciation."<sup>7</sup> It is obvious that both Franklin and Webster favored sweeping changes immediately, for they argued brilliantly and strongly for spelling reform. Yet both were restrained by ineluctable realities, for reform was not so easy in practice as in theory. Webster soon realized that his dictionary would have few purchasers if he persisted in such changes, and ironically, in view of the long lasting influence of his dictionary, he became a powerful defender of traditional English orthography!

Indeed, it takes a very courageous and selfless man to be a true reformer of any traditional spelling, as so remarked by Walter William Skeat, editor of the Etymological Dictionary of the English Language and Glossary of Tudor and Stuart Words, member of the spelling reform movement when he said:

it is notorious that all the leading philologists of Europe, during the last quarter of a century, have unanimously condemned the present chaotic spelling of the English language, and have received on the part of the public generally, and of the most blatant and ignorant among the self-constituted critics, nothing but abusive ridicule. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Some significant 19th century experiments with Pitman phonography or other systems of phonetic alphabet for the teaching of reading in the United States were, notably, the Waltham, Massachusetts experiment, 1852-1863, supported by the Rev. Thomas W. Hill, chairman of the Waltham School Committee; the St. Louis, Missouri experiment, 1866-1892, supported by William T. Harris, Superintendent of Schools; the Boston,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 391-406.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Brander Matthews, Parts of Speech: Essay on English (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1901), p. 319.

Massachusetts experiment, 1866-1879; the Portland, Maine experiment, 1875-1883, et cetera.<sup>9</sup> All these experiments achieved impressive successes as evidenced by reports from Horace Mann and Zalmon Richards, who testified with excitement about the result of teaching with phonetics.<sup>10</sup> However, these are alternative methods of teaching reading rather than straightforward spelling reform, and they failed to take root due to various human and technical reasons. Nevertheless, these experiments did reveal the advantages and necessity of simplified spelling or spelling reform.

In 1876, several prominent members of the American Philological Association sponsored the International Convention for the Amendment of English Orthography to be held in Philadelphia in conjunction with the Centennial Exposition. To this convention Melvil Dewey was invited and, though not a philologist, served as Secretary. His enthusiasm and organizational ability must have impressed the other participants deeply, as the convention resolved itself into a permanent organization, Francis A. March, ex-president of the Association and professor of comparative philology of Lafayette College, Pennsylvania, was elected president and Dewey secretary of the new Spelling Reform Association. Supported by a distinguished group of scholars, officers of the new organization included: Frederick A. P. Barnard, President of Columbia College; Francis J. Child, Professor of English, Harvard University;

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<sup>9</sup> Albert E. Bothe, Jr., Nineteenth-century Experiments with Traditional Reading Media (Baltimore: Department of Education, Johns Hopkins University, 1967).

<sup>10</sup> Godfrey Dewey, English Spelling: Roadblock to Reading (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1971), pp. 21 & 50.

William T. Harris, Director of School of Philosophy, Concord, Massachusetts; Thomas M. Lounsbury, Professor of English, Yale College; Joseph Medill, editor of the Chicago Tribune; Henry L. Wayland, editor of The National Baptist; Joseph Thomas, editor of Lippincott's Gazetteer; William Hayes Ward, editor of The Independent, New York; Howard Crosby, Chancellor of the University of the City of New York; Daniel B. Hagar, Principal of the State Normal School, Salem, Massachusetts; J. C. Gilchrist, Principal of the Iowa State Normal School, Cedar Falls, Iowa; Thomas R. Price, Professor of English, Columbia College; William D. Whitney, Professor of Comparative Philology, Yale College, and many others.<sup>11</sup>

The early history and activities of the Association were reported by Francis March in a publication by the U. S. Bureau of Education as requested by William T. Harris, Commissioner of Education.<sup>12</sup> The mission of the Association was spelt out by William Whitney in an early report known as the "Principal of '76":

"(1) The true and sole office of alphabetic writing is faithfully and intelligibly to represent spoken speech. So-called 'historical' orthography is only a concession to the weakness of prejudice.

"(2) The ideal of an alphabet is that every sound should have its own unvarying sign, and every sign its own unvarying sound.

"(6) To prepare the way for such a change, the first step is to break down, by the combined influence of enlightened scholars and of practical educators, the immense and stubborn prejudice which regards the established modes of spelling almost as constituting the language, as having a sacred character, as in them-

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<sup>11</sup>"Spelling Reform Association. Officers for 1886-1887," Spelling 1 (May 1887): 1.

<sup>12</sup>U.S. Bureau of Education, The Spelling Reform, by Francis March, Circular of Information No. 8 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1893).

selves preferabl to others. All agitation and all definit proposals of reform ar to be welcumd so far as they work in this direction. . . ."13

Working whole-heartedly and unvaryingly in this direction, Dewey served as the secretary of the organization for nearly sixty years, providing the impetus, gathering followers and contributing financial and moral support for the reform movement, but without much public recognition or gains.

As early as 1885, he organized the New York Language Club based in Columbia College. President Frederick A. P. Barnard of Columbia was elected president; vice-presidents were David Dudley Field, Howard Crosby, Roswell D. Hitchcock and William H. Arnoux. Inevitably, the secretary and treasurer was Melvil Dewey, who performed the actual work and gradually provided new direction and aims for the Club. Originally, according to President Barnard, "the object of the organization [was] to be the preservation of the purity of the English language, both written and spoken,"<sup>14</sup> against foreign elements. As to the question of spelling reform, Barnard's opinion was that it "must not be attempted rashly or in defiance of public opinion."<sup>15</sup> In the Club circulars edited by Dewey, however, the following objectives appeared:

To simplify the spelling; to perfect the language; to make education easier for the people; to take a useless tax from writing and printing; to quicken the universal diffusion of knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Newspaper clipping, n.d., n.p., Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> New York Language Club, Circulars of Information, Melvil Dewey Papers.

Many professors and clergymen joined the Club, subsequently some of them became active members of the spelling reform movement. An outstanding member, Charles P. Scott, editor of the Century Dictionary, worked closely with Dewey and became the secretary of the Simplified Spelling Board financed by Andrew Carnegie, and then formed his own Phonetic Society in Yonkers, New York, when Carnegie's funding stopped in 1919. Unlike the others, however, Dewey held on to the reform movement long after all financial and moral support had ceased; he and his son Godfrey became the surviving pillars of the unpopular movement, and, sometimes the laughing-stock of conventional educators and writers.

Dewey's efforts in spelling reform paralleled that of his library work. Following the example of the Library Journal founded to serve the library field, Dewey initiated the publication of a quarterly journal called Spelling, "a magazine devoted to the simplification of English orthography; official organ of the Spelling Reform Association."<sup>17</sup> Beginning May 1887, Spelling recorded and in fact constituted the chief activity of the Association. Published by his Library Bureau in Boston, together with other occasional pamphlets and documents, Dewey assumed the editing and financing of the publication. The difficulties were stated in the first editorial of the Spelling:

It is well known that reformatory journals have 'no money in them.' This journal is begun and will be carried on for a reasonable time, in the hope that the friends of reform and the public will find it useful, and will give a sufficient support. If, after a reasonable time, it is not supported, it will die; for we reserve the privilege of acknowledging, should occasion arise, the powerful logic of a big printer's bill in a little treasury.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Spelling 1 (May 1887): 1.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

Four issues were published during 1887, and five more between 1892 and 1894, before Dewey had to discontinue the publication due to the lack of time and financial support. His son, Godfrey, revived the publication in 1925 and again in 1931, in a different format for a very short duration.<sup>19</sup> For scholars on spelling reform, this periodical is a rare source of its kind.

As editor of the Library Journal, Library Notes and other publications of the Library Bureau, Dewey also used simplified spelling whenever permissible. As he explained "to readers who dislike our spelling" in the Library Notes:

For 20 years we hav studied this matter, fairly considering all the objections urged against these simplifications. We find the ENTIRE WEIGHT OF BOTH SCHOLARSHIP AND REASON in their favor; and, recognizing this truth, we can find no escape from the duty of using them and bearing our share of the prejudice that must be borne by sum til the better spelling cums into general use. . . . in hundreds of cases the experience has been repeated, that scholarly and sensible people who feel strongly against the 'Josh Billings looking' spelling, once induced to examine into the subject, find it impossible to escape conversion. We do not purpose turning Library Notes into a spelling-reform journal, but we feel in good onscience bound to make the more urgent needed changes. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Dewey cooperated closely with E. O. Vaile of Chicago, editor of Intelligence and Educational Weekly, another strong, dedicated leader of the movement. For more than twenty years, Vaile also used simplified spellings in his magazines and worked energetically with the NEA for the appointment of committees and promotion of the whole cause. In 1897, the Department of Superintendence of the NEA adopted a resolution to use simplified spelling in its record. In 1898, the NEA board

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<sup>19</sup> Spelling 1 (March 1925); 2 (March 1931).

<sup>20</sup> Melvil Dewey, "To Readers Who Dislike Our Spelling," Library Notes 2 (September 1887): 149.



approved the use of some simplified forms and ordered the secretary to use the following twelve words in NEA publications, namely, program, tho, altho, thoro, thorofare, thru, thruout, catalog, prolog, decalog, demagog, and pedagog, commonly known as the NEA 12 words.<sup>21</sup>

In 1901, E. O. Vaile prepared an elaborate resolution calling upon the NEA to give a grant of \$1000 for five years to promote the movement. He had secured the consent of twenty prominent educators to serve as an authoritative supervising commission, for the very existence of such a commission would be a potent influence for reform. These twenty proposed members included Melvil Dewey, William R. Harper, John Dewey, Ella F. Young, Francis W. Parker, Andrew S. Draper, Benjamin E. Smith . . . and the superintendents of the schools of Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Boston.<sup>22</sup> Campaigning like Melvil Dewey, Vaile was a dedicated, indefatigable, and undiscourageable reformer, but with an irascible disposition. After a lengthy and hot debate among the NEA directors, unfortunately, Vaile's resolution was tabled indefinitely.<sup>23</sup>

From 1901 to 1906 the indefatigable E. O. Vaile kept trying to gain more moral and financial support from the NEA, but the complexities of procedures of this national association and the conservatism and

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<sup>21</sup>National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1898), p. 37.

<sup>22</sup>National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Fortieth Annual Meeting (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1901), p. 210.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

individualism of the educators were too strong to be overcome. Some regional teachers' associations and the boards of education of many big cities did endorse the movement, but a most critical support was lacking -- the treasury of the Spelling Reform Association was too poor to carry out an effective campaign. Other members of the reform movement also attempted to raise funds but all failed to overcome the bureaucratic red tape within the NEA. For instance, Calvin Thomas, professor of Columbia, submitted a plan A and a plan B to the Board of Directors of the NEA for modest funding but it fell through in 1904; William H. Maxwell, president of the NEA in 1905 presented a modified proposal for a sum of \$10,000, but this plan also ended in frustration.<sup>24</sup> The NEA directors were equally divided on this issue.

It was the resourceful Dewey who turned to Andrew Carnegie and obtained generous support from the philanthropist. Named by Dewey as "the patron saint of libraries," Carnegie built many public libraries but denied Dewey's previous requests to support his Albany library school, yet promised him \$10,000 a year for ten years to support the spelling reform, and actually donated \$260,000 within fourteen years. Correspondence between Carnegie and Dewey revealed the practical nature of Carnegie and the tenacity and ambition of Dewey. While Carnegie looked at the gains that could be made with his investment, Dewey looked at the long range progress of the reform movement. Quotations from some of Carnegie's letters are worth mentioning:

You said that you could get the signature of the leading principals and professors of universities and the highest authorities to agree to use improved spelling of at least ten or twelve words. . . .

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<sup>24</sup> National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Forty-fourth Annual Meeting (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1905), pp. 281-285.

The money I agree to give as needed was to be spent in circulating the knowledge of this fact and to develop the work in other ways by hastening the general use of new spelling.

I attach more importance to getting right on the ten most awkward words than I do to any general and wide scheme that could be suggested. I want some practical result for my money, to begin with. I should consider the success in the general adoption of the change in those ten words worth Ten Thousand Dollars a year for ten years and would not consider more talk worth One Dollar.<sup>25</sup>

The ambitious Dewey wanted Carnegie to support a general, long term spelling reform, but Carnegie was more pragmatic and cautious in such undertaking. He responded to Dewey's 'wide scheme' several days later:

You stated that you could get the signatures of the leading educationalists of the world to agree to use improved spelling in a number of the worst words, I think the number was ten. Until that is done, I have nothing to do in the premises.<sup>26</sup>

The persistence of Dewey for an all out reform and the insistence of Carnegie on his own terms are reflected in the following letters from Carnegie:

I stand just where I did, most anxious to get the leaders to adopt the improved spelling of ten words and upon my return will be glad to see you upon the subject.<sup>27</sup>

Again, from Skibo Castle, Ardgay, Scotland, Carnegie reminded the crusading reformer that:

Your favor received. You seem to have again strayed from the path. Let me say to you I will do nothing unless a body of the foremost literary men can be pledged to use improved spelling for

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew Carnegie to Melvil Dewey, April 1, 1903, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Carnegie to Melvil Dewey, April 7, 1903, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Carnegie to Melvil Dewey, April 27, 1903, Melvil Dewey Papers.

the ten worst words. This was your offer and what I accepted, and to it I stand. Let me see your list of men and their signatures. I should be one, but do not count, as I do not rank with the pundits.<sup>28</sup>

Still trying to convince Carnegie to launch an open war on spelling, rather than limit it to ten words at a time, Dewey finally received this impatient letter from Carnegie:

"My dear Mr. Dewey,

"I do not need any advice in regard to spelling. Surely, you know by this time I have made up my mind that reform in spelling can only come by degrees. What I said to you was that if you could get the signatures of a goodly number of the foremost men to agree to use improved spelling in, I think it was, ten or a dozen words, I would be glad to aid the matter by providing the necessary funds. There is no use in trying to get me to change this.

"Very truly yours,

"Andrew Carnegie"<sup>29</sup>

Realizing that it was either conform to Carnegie's concept of reform or attempt general reform without financial support, Dewey settled on informing his colleagues by distributing a circular letter on March 24, 1904. This circular included a blank pledge that read:

I hereby agree to use habitually in my own writing at least 10 of the 12 shorter spellings adopted by the National Education Association.<sup>30</sup>

Responses from educators and scholars were overwhelmingly supportive of the pledge. Dr. Charles Payson Gurley Scott, professor of

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<sup>28</sup> Andrew Carnegie to Melvil Dewey, June 4, 1903, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Carnegie to Melvil Dewey, January 14, 1904, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>30</sup> Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 272.

philology of Columbia and editor of the Century Dictionary told Dewey that:

In answer to your circular letter to the members of the conference called anticipatively the Carnegie conference, I say, conform to any preliminary conditions that Mr. Carnegie thinks fit to lay down. If Mr. Carnegie thinks that the members of the conference, or any of them, are going to err on the side of scientific precision or insistence upon impracticable plans, his mind should be disabused of that notion. Mr. Carnegie has not, so far as I know, ever had any communication with the committee, and he has no means of knowing whether proposals or plans not yet formulated or approved by the committee are too precise or are impracticable. . . . it will be a red feather in your cap if you finally land him on the green banks of reform. Let no gilt-edged man escape!

The Twelve Words approved by the N.E.A. are unimportant in themselves, but if 20,000 persons approve them in practice, it will give a great impetus to what is needed beyond. If Mr. Carnegie will step up like a little man, and take the medicine in the sign of all mankind, we shall all rejoice, and shall say to each of the other Twenty Eminent men, Go thou and do likewise. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, most of the eminent men Dewey wrote to pledged themselves that they would do likewise, even people who hesitated formerly. An earlier letter from Isaac K. Funk of the Funk and Wagnalls Dictionaries illustrated their hesitation:

Of course you are right about my not being prominently identified with the effort to push spelling reform as now contemplated, nor should anyone who is identified with either dictionaries or school books. . . . As Dr. [William T.] Harris is now Editor of the Webster Dictionary, is it altogether fair that he should be identified with the movement or rather with the committee that pushes the movement? . . .

My dear Doctor, I never intended to permit my name to go on the committee; I agreed only to meet with a few others in an informal way to get the organization started. . . .

Why not first have an informal meeting at Columbia of a few to agree upon plans . . . .<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Charles P. G. Scott to Melvil Dewey, March 29, 1904, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>32</sup> Isaac K. Funk to Melvil Dewey, January 21, 1903, Melvil Dewey Papers.

Dewey took the advice and had an informal meeting at Columbia, as a result, all top editors of the leading dictionaries, such as the Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary, the Webster's Dictionary, the Century Dictionary and many publishers became active supporters of the reform.

As philologists and lexicographers were identified with the movement, many educators also began to see the logic and advantages of simplified spelling. A campaign letter signed by Isaac Funk, Henry Holt, publisher and author, and Charles Sprague, businessman, stated that:

In 1905 a vote by mail was taken among the members of the National Educational Association, which consists chiefly of teachers and superintendents of education, for the purpose of determining the Association's attitude toward simplified spelling: One thousand five hundred and forty-five members approved the movement, and only one hundred and seventy-one opposed it -- nine to one favored simplification.<sup>33</sup>

As a result of Melvil Dewey's leadership and tireless efforts to drum up support, Andrew Carnegie was evidently convinced and decided to donate \$15,000 a year, five thousand dollars more than what he originally promised, to found an association. On January 12, 1906, the Simplified Spelling Board was organized, "to promote, by systematic and continued effort, the gradual simplification and regulation of English spelling."<sup>34</sup> The original members of the Board were only eleven, but soon grew into a powerful organization with an Advisory Council of two

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<sup>33</sup>Circular letter from the Simplified Spelling Board to business men soliciting support, December 29, 1906. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>34</sup>Simplified Spelling Board, Circular No. 16, November 28, 1907. Melvil Dewey Papers.

hundred and fifty members, all of them were scholars or educators of recognized status and influence in their fields. Many publishers and prominent business men were also supportive members. Since Carnegie insisted on moderate, slow going simplification of spellings, Dewey was compelled to play the game by Carnegie's rules, To avoid conflict of interest and confusion of the public, and partly due to lack of financial support, the more radical Spelling Reform Association remained completely inactive until the death of Carnegie in 1919. During this period, Dewey devoted his energy and efforts to the growth and development of the new Simplified Spelling Board. The origin and aim of the Board was fully corroborated by an article in the New York Times on September 4, 1906:

In a letter to The Times [London] Andrew Carnegie explains the origin, aims, and methods of the Simplified Spelling Board and defends it against the charge that it is a revolutionary body.<sup>35</sup>

According to Carnegie:

The society had its origin in this way. Upon consultation it was thought that if fifty of the foremost literary men in America would agree to adopt a few changes in spelling, which all agreed would be decided improvements, the society should be formed. Some 650 circulars were addressed to such men. The replies were astonishing. Nearly 600 pledged themselves to use the following 12 words: tho, altho, thoro, thorofare, thru, thruout, catalog, decalog, demagog, pedagog, prolog, program. So far these are all that the members have agreed to use.<sup>36</sup>

Carnegie further explained that:

It recognizes that changes must be of slow growth, agreeing with Gladstone's words, written in 1874: 'There is much that might be done with advantage in the reform of the spelling of the English

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<sup>35</sup>"Joint Spelling Board Suggested by Carnegie," New York Times, 4 September 1906, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup>Carengie to London Times, September 3, 1906, cited in Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 273.

language.' But the main thing is that whatever may be proposed should be proposed with the weight of great authority to back it. The aim is not to destroy the language of Shakeapeare and Milton, but to continue and if possible hasten its further development, that it may become a more and more efficient instrument. It has admittedly become such since the great master's time, he being himself, as I understand, the greatest coiner of new words, new meanings, and new spellings who ever enriched the language.

There can be little doubt that after another four centuries English will be even more efficient than today. . . .<sup>37</sup>

At the time Carnegie spoke, the movement of spelling reform was attracting popular attention and making news headlines daily. A "List of Common Words Spelled in Two or More Ways"--the three hundred simpler words--was published by the Board. "Editors of Leading Dictionaries Here and in England Favor the Proposed Reform," as reported by the New York Times on August 28, 1906:

. . . Dr. Murray is the senior editor of the Oxford Dictionary, and an ardent advocate of the reform movement. In his letter of acceptance to the board he expressed his entire sympathy with the work he board has undertaken. Prof. Wright is Professor of Comparative Philology in Oxford University, and editor of the English Dialect Dictionary, which has just been completed after thirty years of work. "Prof. Skeat, the editor of the English Etymological Dictionary, became a member of the board two months ago," said Prof. Brander Matthews, Chairman of the board, yesterday. The Simplified Spelling Board now includes the editors of the three chief English dictionaries published in Great Britain as well as the editors of the three chief American dictionaries, Webster's, the Century, and the Standard. . . .<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, in a surprise move, President Theodore Roosevelt, a member of the Board, directed the public printer to use the three hundred simplified words recommended by the Board. Unfortunately, public reaction toward this undemocratic order ranged from shock, confusion and resentment of presidential power, which turned out to be an impedi-

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<sup>37</sup>"Carnegie," New York Times, 4 September 1906, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup>"President Surprised even Simple Spellers," New York Times, 28 August 1906, p. 2.



ment rather than a stimulus for the reform. In light of its historical significance, President Roosevelt's letter on simplified spelling is worth noting:

"The Hon. Charles A. Stillings, Public Printer,  
Washington, D.C.

"My Dear Mr. Stillings:

"I inclose herewith copies of certain circulars of the Simplified Spelling Board, which can be obtained free from the board, at 1 Madison Avenue, New York City. Please hereafter direct that in all Government publications of the executive departments the 300 words enumerated in Circular 5 shall be spelled as therein set forth. If anyone asks the reason for the action, refer him to Circulars 3, 4 and 6, as issued by the Simplified Spelling Board. Most of the criticism of the proposed step is evidently made in entire ignorance of the very moderate and common sense views as to the purposes to be achieved, which views are so well set forth in the circulars to which I have referred. There is not the slightest intention to do anything revolutionary or initiate any far-reaching policy. The purpose simply is for the Government, instead of lagging behind popular sentiment, to advance abreast of it, and at the same time abreast of the views of the ablest and most practical educators of our time, as well as of the most profound scholars--men of the stamp of Prof. Lounsbury and Prof. Skeat.

"If the slight changes in the spelling of the 300 words proposed wholly or partially meet popular approval, then the changes will become permanent, without any preference to what public officials or individual private citizens may feel; if they do not ultimately meet with popular approval, they will be dropt [sic], and that is all there is about it. . . ."39

The reasons and arguments for simplified spelling in those circulars were summarized and published for the Board from Lake Placid Club, New York, in still another circular of a later date:

- "1. Make English spelling more correct, scientifically and historically;
- "2. Make it easier to spel correctly;
- "3. Make the spelling lesson an aid, insted of an obstacle, to the development of the child's reasoning powers;
- "4. Improve and tend to standardize pronunciation;

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<sup>39</sup>"To Test New Spelling, President Now Says," New York Times, 3 September 1906, p. 1.

- "5. Save time (and expense) in elementary education;
- "6. Save time (and expense) in writing, typewriting, and printing;
- "7. Remove the greatest barrier to the Americanization of our foren population;
- "8. Remove the greatest barrier to the use of English as an international language.<sup>40</sup>

Most of the support for reform came from scholars and educators, as evidenced by the following article:

Supt. Chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools announced to-day that he would introduce the simplified spelling system alternatively in the higher grammer grades.

The pupils will have their choice of the older or the new. In the lower grades the old system will be continued.<sup>41</sup>

Another article also indicated strong support:

Edward B. Snallow, Acting City Superintendent of the New York Public Schools, when asked yesterday his opinion as to the value of simplified spelling in the public schools, said:

. . . Our present system of spelling, as Dr. William T. Harris says, wastes nearly two years needed by the pupils for other subjects. If two years of the cost of educating each child can be saved for his parents, and at the time the child can get a more useful education, the cost of textbooks, even if it were necessary to replace all of them at once, would be trifling. It costs \$42.44 a year to educate a child, if average attendance is taken as the criterion. In two years this would amount to \$84.88. With 500,000 children in average attendance this would mean that in every eight years \$42,440,000 is wasted in teaching spelling. But do not understand that the 300 works alone will do this. They will not. They are but the beginning. But it certainly is worthwhile to make an entirely harmless preliminary experiment without cost, which may prove one of the greatest educational economies recently advanced.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Simplified Spelling Board, Reasons and Rules for Simplified Spelling (Lake Placid Club, New York: January 1924).

<sup>41</sup>"Puts Spelling Up to Pupils," New York Times, 28 August 1906, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup>"Simple Spelling a Saving," New York Times, 2 September 1906, p. 22.

Endorsement also came from Canadian educators, for example, in Toronto:

. . . Chief Inspector of Public Schools Hughes of that city and others have for many years been prominent in a spelling reform organization, and have been looking forward to the day when a simpler method of spelling would be adopted.

Discussing President Roosevelt's recent utterances, Inspector Hughes said:

"I believe that Toronto could change its system of spelling with profit both to teachers and pupils. I believe it is within the power of the Board of Education to adopt a system of spelling reform that would be entirely voluntary. We are living for the future, and should shape our educational policy to fit in with the progress of the age. . . ."43

Nevertheless, President Roosevelt's high-handed order aroused national and international criticism and opposition from his political enemies and the Congress, so finally he had to retreat and confine his usage to White House correspondence.

Lord Strathcona of England expressed his view through the editorial of the Chronicle (London):

Many prominent men here are not averse to the idea of reform so long as it is the outcome of agreement between English-speaking countries. . . .

The Chronicle, editorially repeating its suggestion of an Anglo-American conference, says reform by Presidential ukase is alien to the spirit of the English, and apparently also of Americans.<sup>44</sup>

The British reaction and interest led Andrew Carnegie into further support of the spelling reform movement, as a New York Times article reports:

In answer to The Times's recent remark that Englishmen were willing to learn many things from the United States, and might

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<sup>43</sup>"New Spelling in Toronto," New York Times, 3 September 1906, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup>"Lord Strathcona's View. Thinks Reforms Should be Made by Anglo-American Agreement," New York Times, 28 August 1906, p. 2.

have been persuaded to adopt some of the American views on spelling had they been consulted beforehand, Mr. Carnegie says:

"This opens the door to the suggestion that there might be a joint board. You will notice that among the British scholars who have accepted membership in the American society are Dr. Murray and Dr. Bradley, editors of 'The Oxford English Dictionary'; Prof. Joseph Wright, editor of 'The English Dialect Dictionary,' and Prof. Skeat, editor of 'The Etymological Dictionary of the English Language.' Perhaps these gentlemen will add to their number and form a society here embracing Canada and Australasia [sic], similar to the American and to co-operate with it, or perhaps it would be found advisable to convert our American society into one for the whole English-speaking race."<sup>45</sup>

Following this suggestion, a modest grant was made by Carnegie, and a British Simplified Spelling Society was formed in London in September, 1908. "All of the British and some of the American members of the Simplified Spelling Board are members also of the Simplified Spelling Society of Great Britain."<sup>46</sup> Gradually the simplified spelling movement seemed to gain public acceptance and academic recognition, for example:

The Modern Language Association of America, 22 State Teachers Associations, and many other educational bodies and learned societies approve the movement. Spelling-books and State Courses of Study, in constantly increasing numbers, are including some of the simpler spellings in their regular lists. . . .<sup>460</sup> universities, colleges and normal schools either use simplified spellings in their official publications and correspondence, or permit students to use them in their written work. 173 of these institutions, including 19 state universities, have formally adopted more than 200 simplified spellings, in most cases by faculty resolution. . . .

556 newspapers and periodicals, circulating more than 18,000,000 copies, are using the 12 words of the N.E.A. List, and <sup>47</sup> most of the 300 simpler spellings recommended by the Board. . . .

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<sup>45</sup>"Joint Spelling Board Suggested by Carnegie," New York Times, 4 September 1906, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup>The Simplified Spelling Board, Circular No. 16, 7th ed. (New York: The Board, 1913), p. 1.

<sup>47</sup>Simplified Spelling Board, Reasons and Rules for Simplified Spelling (New York: Lake Placid Club, 1924), p. 1.

When the list of 300 words are analyzed today, more than two hundred have been in frequent use for the past century. As an indication of the popular adaptation of the new words, Dewey personally collected those publications with simpler spellings and underlined each one of these words.

Due to Carnegie's insistence on limited, piecemeal simplifications, the Board never attempted any full-scale, radical phonetic reform, and since the funds were personal gifts, not endowment from the Carnegie Corporation, financial support to the Board lapsed with the death of Carnegie in 1919. Even though members of the Board and Council retained their interest and their convictions, the Board had exhausted its financial support and faced a total collapse. It was at this time that Dewey offered to the Board the use of space and clerical assistance at his Lake Placid Club, New York, and he reactivated the Spelling Reform Association. Thus the Lake Placid Club became the headquarters of both organizations of similar interest but different principles. While Melvil Dewey continued to serve as the secretary of the Spelling Reform Association, his son Godfrey served as the secretary of the Simplified Spelling Board. Both organizations managed to hold occasional meetings and issued unsubsidized publications, tenacious even when it seemed a lost and forgotten cause, both father and son dedicated their long and active lives as leaders in the spelling reform movement. Most of the publications from their Lake Placid Education Foundation, such as the Club Notes, a monthly newsletter published by the Lake Placid Club, and the introductory pages of Dewey Classification by the Forest Press, were printed in simplified spellings. Correspondence

between Dewey and his close friends and family were mostly in simplified spelling or abbreviations.

Between 1891 and 1894, Dewey served on the Committee on Disputed Spellings and Pronunciations of the Standard Dictionary, so it is not a matter of surprise to find that, as special features in all subsequent editions of the Dictionary, the proposals of the Simplified Spelling Board are recorded; rules adopted by the Board are found in the Appendix, as well as the editorial statement that it prefers simpler spelling. The Dictionary also states that when several forms are used by authorities, it will indicate those used by the American Philological Association, the American Spelling Reform Association, and the Simplified Spelling Board.<sup>48</sup>

All three top editors of the Standard Dictionary, Isaac K. Funk, Calvin Thomas and Frank Horace Vizetelly were good friends of Dewey. Funk, Thomas and Dewey were board members of the Simplified Spelling Board; Vizetelly published A Dictionary of Simplified Spelling in the heyday of the reform movement.<sup>49</sup> In 1929, however, when the movement lost its momentum, and the lone runner Dewey asked his friends to publish the Standard Dictionary completely in simplified spelling, he was told humorously that:

It is a queer world in which we live, Dr. Dewey, it is a queer world, but after all, perhaps, it is not the world, it is the

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<sup>48</sup> Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1963), p. xii.

<sup>49</sup> Frank Horace Vizetelly, A Dictionary of Simplified Spelling Based on the Publications of the United States Bureau of Education and the Rules of the American Philological Association and the Simplified Spelling Board, Compiled from the Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1915).

queer people who live in it -- queer like you and me. . . . Next year don't go so far away from civilization.<sup>50</sup>

Dewey's enthusiasm to campaign for the cause, even when it was obviously lost, never changed. When Carnegie's grant was exhausted, he continued to print and distribute literature on spelling reform at his own cost, hoping that more followers could be attracted. The letter quoted here, however, shows the typical response to his crusade:

"Dear Dr. Dewey:

"You will pardon me, I know, if my secretary can't write this letter in 'Simpler Spellings.'

"I write now to tell you though I haven't read entirely the pamphlet on 'Simple Spelling' that you so kindly send me, I am theoretically in hearty accord with the movement, and I am only sorry that I cannot make practical use of the 'Simpler Spellings.' I simply haven't energy enough to try to train everyone with whom I have to work. When you say that language is the greatest tool with which man works, and that its function is to convey meanings clearly and quickly, you say what I have often felt.

"I greatly admire the persistency with which you advocate 'Simpler Spellings,' and realizing as I do how much waste eventually would be ended by its adaption, I look forward to some practical scheme that may start the movement at the source, that is, with the teaching of spelling to children.

"Yours sincerely,

"THE EDITOR MAGAZINE,

"William R. Kane

"Editor"<sup>51</sup>

Never to be discouraged, Dewey responded immediately:

"Yurs of Feb 1 just in. Yu betr read the rest of Simpler Spellin and then rid yurself of the mistaken notion that it takes enerjy to train everyone with whom yu hav to work. I hav uzed it for 50

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<sup>50</sup> Frank H. Vizetelly to Melvil Dewey, September 3, 1929, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>51</sup> William R. Kane to Melvil Dewey, February 1, 1923, Melvil Dewey Papers.

years. It won't take yu 5 minits with any intelijent stenografer to make a start of sum of the simpl rules, e.g., to uze t for ed when so pronounst. Yu wd save time, space and money and not a soul wd criticize. Over 500 periodicals ar uzin more or less of our simpler spellins and the Editor's Magazine specially shd set a good exampl. If yu wd uze nothin but 'tho' and 'thru' it wd make a litl start, but yu can't as an intelijent man recognizin the need, refuze to do at least that litl.

"Melvil Dewey"<sup>52</sup>

Dewey's aggressive campaign also reached the editor of the Time magazine in the following form:

Yu can make a larj & greali needed contribution if with yur groing reputation yu wil set an exampl that mani other editors wil folo, in more kompakt & efficient English.<sup>53</sup>

To such a suggestion, the editor of Time so replied:

We do not make use of the simplified spelling from the feeling that so many persons are accustomed to the traditional manner that the simplified form presents merely an obstruction to easy reading.<sup>54</sup>

As Lake Placid Club became the headquarters of the struggling spelling reform organizations, Dewey also became the struggling spokesman of the dying movement. Sometimes he would beg for an audience when the occasion came.

I shud be glad not only to welcome the district superintendents but I hope yu can giv me during the meeting a half hour in which at 77 I can sum up for yu what my 60 years hav taut me is most needed in education.<sup>55</sup>

Thus he wrote to the organizer of the conference of District Superintendents of Schools, New York, to be held in Lake Placid Club.

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<sup>52</sup>Melvil Dewey to William M. Kane, n.d. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>53</sup>Melvil Dewey to the Editor of Time, August 26, 1929, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>54</sup>Time editor to Melvil Dewey, n.d., Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>55</sup>Melvil Dewey to Superintendent of Schools, Ashville, New York, November 3, 1927, Melvil Dewey Papers.



To the amazed participating educators, Dewey's topic turned out to be: "Simplified spelling for all school children." But then nobody seemed to take the old man's words seriously. Signs such as "Littl Loj," "Pyn Loj," "Sunisyd," "Staj," "Offis" and "Ejwater" would only raise some ready laughs, the words "yst ti" for iced tea in the menu doubtlessly puzzled the uninformed dinner guests, yet to the faithful Melvil Dui, all these simpler words represented an all important cause and causation, so it was said that

After two weeks (in the old days) at the Lake Placid Club, a guest would have trouble spelling "Mayonnaise" for the rest of his or her life. When the Old Man died, the menu appeared in English spelling with no comment, except perhaps a sigh of relief.<sup>56</sup>

Till the last year of his busy life, Dewey still tried to regain support from the Carnegie Corporation after the death of the philanthropist. By then the movement had run out of loyal followers, out of money and out of style. The situation was clearly reflected in the correspondence between Dewey and Gano Dunn, a surviving member of the original Simplified Spelling Board and prominent industrialist close to the Carnegie Corporation in New York:

"Dear Dr. Dewey,

"I acknowledge your letter of the 10th of March, which came after a short visit from Godfrey, in which I made clear to him more than I can put into a letter, the difficulties I have encountered in the last two years in trying to renew the interest of the Carnegie Corporation Trustees in the Simplified Spelling.

"Dr. Keppel, the President, once intimated that if we could get the Simplified Spelling Movement incorporated into one of the broader educational movements, like that of the English Speaking Union, we might be successful, but with several of the other very important Trustees, I have found so fundamental a feeling that the Simplified Spelling Board is too radical, that I believe it is

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<sup>56</sup>Ned Comstock, "The Dewey Dichotomy," Wilson Library Bulletin 52 (January 1978): 402-403.

hopeless to expect success in any direct appeal, particularly now when the Carnegie Corporation's obligations are in excess of its resources, temporarily for the time being.

"One of the leading influences in the Carnegie Corporation constantly brings up your own radical spelling as an instance of what the Board would be fostering if it should help the Simplified Spelling Movement."<sup>57</sup>

These statements were probably true and demonstrative of the circumstances, but Dewey was such a tenacious man that once he believed in something he believed in it wholeheartedly. Even at a ripe old age of seventy-nine, the self-righteous Dewey was prompt to argue that:

Yu may be surpryzd to no that I am in entyr simpathi with yurs of March 14. I hav writn at least 100 letrs to wd-be reformers teling them that their motives wer fyn & the need was the greatest in education but that they wd do mor harm than good by trying for chanjes so radikal that men of afairs wd simpli not look at them. I urjd this speciali on SSS & repeated my warning in SSB meetings, & they fynali gave up trying to spel 40 sounds with 23 letrs & no nu letrs. It was lyk arithmetik with no 7, 8 or 9 but using combinations of other figures to represent them. I was 10 years on the NEA comitee that made the present Standard Dictionari Alfabet. It was thru my protraktet personal urjensi that I induced Dr. Funk to destroy great quantities of the typ already set & stand the hevi cost of substituting the syentifik alfabet. In the 10 years fyt I always took the position yu urj now, that too meni chanjes crowded at once wd dryv away the suport of men without whom we cd not hope to succeed. . . .<sup>58</sup>

Obviously, there are "too meni chanjes crowded at once" in Mr. Dui's writing, but then Mr. Carnegie himself was known to use the similar spelling exclusively from 1906 till the last day of his life, so was President Roosevelt and other supporters of simpler spelling. It is debatable whether Dewey and other reformers had "dryv away the suport of men" or a radical reform of this nature requires more than

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<sup>57</sup> Gano Dunn to Melvil Dewey, March 14, 1931, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>58</sup> Melvil Dewey to Gano Dunn, March 26, 1931, Melvil Dewey Papers.

just the support of the elite class. The problem is simply too complicated in a well established, democratic country such as the United States, where the social, political, cultural and educational traditions are different from other countries that have gone through language reforms.

It is easy to say after the movement has ended that it was simply an exercise in futility. Dewey never wavered from it; neither did his only son Godfrey, who continued his father's career in Lake Placid and formed, in 1946, the Simpler Spelling Association, by a merger of the Spelling Reform Association (founded in 1876) and the Simplified Spelling Board (founded in 1906), and, inescapably, served as secretary of the organization till his death in 1977 at the age of ninety at Lake Placid Club. Naturally, Godfrey Dewey's major publications consist of his Harvard Ed. D. dissertation: "A Sistem of Shorthand for General Use," which became the basis of the Dewey Shorthand textbooks, his authoritative Relative Frequency of English Speech Sounds,<sup>59</sup> and the companion volumes Relative Frequency of English Spellings,<sup>60</sup> How We Spell! or English Heterography,<sup>61</sup> the English Spelling: Roadblock to Reading<sup>62</sup> and numerous studies on reading and spelling appearing in educational journals.

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<sup>59</sup>Godfrey Dewey, Relative Frequency of English Speech Sounds (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923).

<sup>60</sup>Godfrey Dewey, Relative Frequency of English Spellings (New York: Teachers College Press, 1970).

<sup>61</sup>Godfrey Dewey, How We Spell! or English Heterography (Lake Placid, N.Y.: Simplified Spelling Board, 1963).

<sup>62</sup>Godfrey Dewey, English Spelling: Roadblock to Reading (New York: Teachers College Press, 1971).

Now that the reform enthusiasts have left the battle field, the war on reading and spelling has shifted to other fronts. Armed with new audio-visual equipment and scientific methods, teachers still seem to be fighting a losing battle, children struggle to recognize illogical words and adults still have difficulty spelling. In trying to find an answer to the still challenging question "Why Johnny can't read?" some contemporary educators cannot help but wonder whether the torch left by the Deweys should not be picked up again.

#### Metric Education

Just like the spelling reform which Dewey fought for nearly sixty years without much success, metrication for the United States was another crusade to which Dewey devoted constant efforts but again without much success. His interest in the metric system can be traced back to 1867, when he was only fourteen years old. As mentioned earlier in Chapter II, he wrote papers and delivered speeches at local schools and institutes calling for public understanding and adoption of the international metric system. Sixty-six years later, shortly before he died, he was still writing and speaking to educational organizations to promote the same system with the same boyish enthusiasm!

Dewey's career in metric reform was probably initiated by a landmark legislation legalizing the metric system of weights and measures in the United States by the Congress on July 28, 1866.<sup>63</sup> The spirit

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<sup>63</sup>U. S. Department of Commerce, National Bureau of Standards, Weights and Measures Standards of the United States: A Brief History, Special Pubn. 447 (1976), p. 10.

of the act was to increase international contacts; to render commerce simpler for U. S. merchants and industries; and to secure a standard that had a scientific basis. For a reformer who always wanted to simplify things and standardize procedures, the international decimal system of weights and measures was a gospel. Melvil Dewey stated on several occasions that the reason he became interested in the system was because it would save teachers and school children years of trouble in elementary education:

There are two great obstacles in the way of elementary education, to the removal of which earnest men and women are giving time and strength and money. Those best qualified to judge tell us that at least a year of the school-life of every child who passes through our public schools is worse than wasted on compound numbers, our so-called "system" of weights and measures, and that this year would be saved by the complete adoption of the international or metric system, which is merely our ordinary arithmetic applied to all other measures as it now is to our currency. While there are the widest international, commercial and economic reasons for this reform, the members of the American Metric Bureau<sup>64</sup> are chiefly interested in the question from this educational side.

and then he went on to add that, naturally:

The second great obstacle is our absurd spelling, which scholars agree is the worst on the planet. In trying to learn this, two or three years more are worse than wasted.<sup>65</sup>

As to the claim that complete adoption of metric system would save "at least a year of the school-life of every child," estimates varied. On a different occasion, Dewey

. . . called attention to a report from a teachers' association in Great Britain, pointing out that one and a half years of the

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<sup>64</sup>Melvil Dewey, "The Library as an Educator," Library Notes 1 (June 1886): 43.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

school life of each child would be saved by the complete adoption of the decimal system in the English Schools.<sup>66</sup>

Another recent study reported that:

The British Association for the Advancement of Science and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce estimated in 1960 that there would be a saving of 20 percent in the teaching of arithmetic or 5 percent in the total school time for children between seven and eleven years.<sup>67</sup>

Thus Dewey recalled his early struggle with the system:

In skool in Adams Center I rebeld agenst compound numbers. I told the teacher that jeometri taut us a strait lyn was the shortest distance between 2 points & that it was absurd to hav long mezur, surveyor's mezur & cloth mezur; also abzurd to hav quarts & bushels of diferent syzes & to have avoirdupois, troy & apothecari weits with a pound of feathers hevier than a pound of gold. I spred out on my attik room table sheets of foolscap & desyded that the world needed just 1 mezur for length, 1 for capacity & 1 for weit & that they should all be in simpl decimals lyk our muni.

I was puzzling over the names to giv the new mezures when I red that Senator John A. Kasson of Iowa had past in Congress a bil legalizing the metrik sistem. I lookt it up at once, found that it met my plan ideali & the next week went to our vilaj lyceum & gave a talk on the great merit of international weits & mezures. From that day I became a metrik apostl.<sup>68</sup>

Although this reminiscence of a creative old man may be regarded with some suspicion, it is known that Dewey did go to the Adams Center High School on October 9, 1867 and delivered a talk on the great merits of the international metric system. Indeed, he became a metric apostle till the end of his life.

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<sup>66</sup>National Education Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Twenty-sixth Annual Meeting (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1887), p. 174.

<sup>67</sup>U. S. Department of Commerce, National Bureau of Standards, A Metric America, Special Pubn. no. 345 (1971), p. 117.

<sup>68</sup>Autobiographical notes dated 1931 (Typescript), Melvil Dewey Papers.

Dewey continued the story of his early participation in the movement:

When I went to Boston in April, 1876 I soon saw clearli that my lyf work was universal education chiefli thru reading & free publik libraries & that libraries wd be useles to those who could not read, that Massachusetts in spyt of its World Fair medals for its eminence in education was losing on illiterasi, & that 1 of the 2 chief reasons why it took America so much longer than Germany & Italy to teach efisient reading was the waste of tym over compound numbers. I had charterd the American Metric Bureau for teaching & introducing into praktikal use the international decimal weits & mezures. I induced Charles Francis Adams as 1 of the leading Americans to accept the presidensi whyl I as sekretari had all the hard work. We campeind on this for 6 years & made great progress. . . .<sup>69</sup>

A note of clarification is in order here. Since Congressman Kasson had stressed the importance of educating the "rising generation" to the simplicity and utility of the metric system instead of enforcing the conversion by government legislation, educators became interested in the methods and strategy of metric education for the nation. As early as 1873, Frederick P. A. Barnard, a metric advocate and metrologist, created an organization named Americal Metrological Society to promote the system. The Society attracted many influential members, among them: Congressman Kasson, a dozen other U. S. Senators and Representatives, eminent scientists and educators, and the young librarian Melvil Dewey. In addition to its interest in advancing the metric system, the Society was concerned with internationally uniform coinage, Standard Time zones, new metrological units and standards, and many other issues. So much of the Society's energy was being taken up by other matters that it seemed the best contribution the Society might

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

have made was in the publication of the proceedings of the semi-annual meetings held among some of its members.<sup>70</sup>

A convention of the Society held in June, 1876 in Philadelphia spawned a small group of educators to organize a special association for the promotion of the metric system through education. Thus the American Metric Bureau was founded and Dr. Barnard became its president and Dewey the executive director.

For six years, the headquarters of the American Metric Bureau in Boston was a rented office staffed by Dewey, the same office where he edited the Library Journal, Spelling, and the monthly Bulletin of the American Metric Bureau. According to the 1878 Bulletin, officers of the Bureau were: president, Frederick A. P. Barnard, president of Columbia College; vice presidents: Charles Francis Adams, historian, civic leader, and brother of Brooks and Henry Adams; William Frothingham Bradbury, professor of mathematics and later the head master of Cambridge Latin School; and William Watson, the first professor at the new Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Then there were committees such as finance, membership, publication, legislation, medicine, education, press, and manufacturing. Most of the committee members were educators and scholars.<sup>71</sup> The Constitution of the Bureau stated that:

The object of this Bureau shall be to disseminate information concerning the Metric System; to urge its early adoption; and to bring about actual introductions wherever practicable. To this end it will secure the delivery of addresses; publish articles, circulate books, pamphlets, and charts; distribute scales and

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<sup>70</sup>"The American Metrological Society," Bulletin of the American Metric Bureau 7 (January 1877): 1-16.

<sup>71</sup>"Officers for 1878," Bulletin of the American Metric Bureau 19 (January 1878): inside cover page.



measures; introduce the practical teaching of the system in schools; and in all proper ways, as far as the means at its disposal will allow, the Bureau will urge the matter upon the attention of the American people, till they shall join the rest of the world in the exclusive use of the International Decimal Weights and Measures.<sup>72</sup>

In order to reach this objective, Dewey set up a Supply Department in his office, raised a so-called Sinking Fund of ten thousand dollars, and distributed various metric apparatus and models to schools and individuals at very low prices. Such apparatus included textbooks as the Metric Manual for Schools,<sup>73</sup> the Metric Primer,<sup>74</sup> and other publications,<sup>75</sup> charts, circulars, tables, metric stationary, tapes, glass graduates, liter cups, barometers, thermometers, metric blocks, metric sticks, school rules, scales, brass weights and other items for "object teaching." These apparatus and measures were distributed from his Boston office and from over thirty depository outlets in supportive schools and stores across the country. As the secretary-manager, Dewey worked diligently without any monetary compensation for six years. By the time he left Boston for Columbia, he was heavily in debt, but he also made a name for himself as an educational reformer and a leading metric crusader.

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<sup>73</sup>Henry E. Sawyer, Metric Manual for Schools (Boston: American Metric Bureau, 1878), 80 p.

<sup>74</sup>Metric Primer (Boston: American Metric Bureau, 1878), 64 p.

<sup>75</sup>Pickering J. Putnam, The Metric System of Weights and Measures (Boston: American Metric Bureau, 1877), 83p.; Persifor Frazer, The Proposed Substitution of the Metric for Our Own System of Weights and Measures (Boston: American Metric Bureau, 1878); Barnard, F.A.P., The Metric System of Weights and Measures; an Address delivered before the Convocation of the University of the State of New York at Albany, Aug. 1, 1871, rev. and supplemented with latest legislation and information by M. Dewey (Boston: American Metric Bureau, 1878).

With Dewey's interest in the American Library Association, naturally, his early success in metric reform was making the Association decide to go metric. When the Committee on the Sizes of Books met to establish standards and designation of measurement (since some of the libraries arranged their books by size at that time, standardization of measurements was an important issue), Dewey skillfully manipulated the meeting to support some of his favorite proposals. Hence such simplified spelling and metric became official standards: "as F for folio; Q for quarto; O for octavo, etc. And that this measurement be made in centimeters."<sup>76</sup> Such resolution came as a shock to some conservative members, as the proceedings later so indicated:

Mr. Poole.--As one of the committee, I must say that I don't recognize all parts of this report as the action of the committee. I am not aware that we adopted all the points in the report which has just been read.

Mr. Dewey.--It will shed some light on the remarks of the gentleman from Chicago if I say that during the session of this committee last evening a very small minority felt constrained to retire -- shall I say it? -- to smoke. It was during the absence of this small minority that the report presented was unanimously adopted by the committee.

Mr. Smith confessed to a short absence from the sessions of the committee, in company with Mr. Poole, but supported the report of the committee, as he had given Mr. Dewey full power to cast his vote on the final report.<sup>77</sup>

Serving as the secretary of the Association and editor of the Library Journal and Library Notes, Dewey wrote numerous articles promoting the metric system for libraries. His Library Supply Department in Boston also supplied stationary and library equipment in metric sizes, with series of advertisements to promote his business and thus his reform in libraries.

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<sup>76</sup>"American Library Association Proceedings. 1889" Library Journal 14 (May-June 1889): 284.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

On the metric charts printed and sent out by Dewey to those who were interested in the reform, the following words of promotion were added:

The American Metric Bureau (General Offices 32 Hawley Street, Boston) has been incorporated as "as Missionary Society for educational purposes," to secure the vast advantages of the new system. Its membership includes hundreds of the leading educators of the entire country. All are invited to share in the work.

Thousands of inquiries are made and must be answered mostly through printed forms. Specify distinctly the information wanted, whether about the society, the system, apparatus for teaching, or needed measures, and it will be promptly sent by the Society's Secretary, Melvil Dewey, P. O. 260, Boston.<sup>78</sup>

When the Bureau was first established in June, 1876, only several friends of Dewey participated in the organization. By November of 1876, membership grew to 185, in February 1878, the Bureau claimed to have five hundred members with regular meetings, numerous standing committees and publications for wide distribution. Most of the activities of the Bureau were planned for school teachers and students. As Dewey so stated:

Large committees of our ablest teachers after full examination have reported that the complete introduction of the metric weights and measures, now making so rapid progress in this country, would save a full year of the school-life of every child.

In spite of all the efforts that are made in the cause of popular education, illiteracy is increasing faster than our population. The year saved would be enough to turn the scale. In a country depending for the safety of its free institutions upon the education of the people, these facts are of the most serious importance. . . .

Such being the case, every friend of education, economy, and progress, must have a strong interest in the efforts now meeting <sup>79</sup> with so much success, to secure these advantages for our country.

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<sup>78</sup> Melvil Dewey, "New Cheap Charts," Bulletin of the American Metric Bureau 27 (September 1878): 432.

<sup>79</sup> Melvil Dewey, "Education," Bulletin of the American Metric Bureau 22 (April 1878): 352.

In Massachusetts, a resolution was passed by the state legislature in 1876:

Resolved, That the senators and representatives in Congress from this Commonwealth are hereby requested to forward, by all legitimate means, the introduction of the metric system of weights and measures, as the sole legalized standard throughout the United States.<sup>80</sup>

In 1877, the Metric Bureau appointed a committee to secure the necessary metric standards for the sealers of the State and asked for an appropriation of \$900 for the project. The state legislature, "on the third reading, amended the bill, making it \$1200 instead of \$900, and passed it by a large majority."<sup>81</sup> As Dewey recalled in his biographical notes:

I aranjd with Fairbanks & Co in skales, with the Standard Rule & Level Co, & Keuffel & Esser for length mezures, & with George M. Eddy & Co for capasiti mezures & we suplyd some of the state departments & 100s of skools with standard metrik weits & mezures.

We had 100s of adreses givn befor teachers' associations, printed a Metric Bulletin, later cald Advocate & got 100s of papers & magazines to print our artikls. . . .

When I was cald to Columbia in May, 1883 I was so deepli absorb'd in new work there & keeping up my chief job as founder-secretari & maid of all work for American Library Association & Spelling Reform Association that I cd giv litl attention to metriks. H.E. Davidson, my asistant to whom I had turnd over my Boston ofis & work did what he could for a series of years but when my aktiv missionari eforts wer of necesiti suspended the work lagd. Fynali Howard Richards, a Yale man of independent means, organyzd the Metric Association & took up the propagandist work & did what he cd with limited means, so that each year the publik here as in England ar being graduali educated to the importance & the enormus saving that wd come in direkt use in education & in increase of international trade with the 55 nations that hav at last adopted metriks.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Progress," Bulletin of the American Metric Bureau 24 (June 1878): 375-376.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 376-377.

<sup>82</sup>Autobiographical notes written in 1931, Melvil Dewey Papers.

During his busy years in Columbia, actually, Dewey did not give up his crusade for metrics. He became an active member, and inevitably, the secretary of the American Metrological Society; and the librarian's office in Columbia College became the national headquarters of the Society. Once again Dewey became enthusiastically involved in all the activities of the Society. He organized a metrological library in Columbia, indexed and published the proceedings of the Society from 1873 to 1888, and promoted the activities of the Society.<sup>83</sup> Among its numerous members, "many care most to advance the introduction of the Metric System; others to promote Standard Time and the 24-hour day; others to eliminate the confusion and variation in English measures. . . ."<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, President Barnard died in 1889, and Dewey resigned from Columbia to accept his new position in Albany, and the Society simply faded.

Yet the American Metrological Society and the American Metric Bureau did manage to spark some interest in the nation. Many educators and scientists became supporters of the system as well as members of the organizations coordinated by Barnard and Dewey. As indicated by Dewey in the Bulletin of the Metric Bureau, many state and local educational associations had endorsed the system and urged teachers to study and teach metrics, and

. . . the Metric Bureau distributed 10,000 circulars to physicians and druggists through the entire country, and there has been a

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<sup>83</sup>Barnard, The Metric System of Weights and Measures, . . . rev. and supplemented by Dewey.

<sup>84</sup>Melvil Dewey, Circular letter to members of the American Metrological Society [1888], Melvil Dewey Papers.

steadily-increasing number adopting the system. The friends consider the question for medicine practically settled, and are merely waiting for the individuals to take up the new measure.<sup>85</sup>

Indeed, individuals and organizations began to take up the new measure, as Dewey went on to quote "a letter from the Surgeon-General's office," the National College of Pharmacy, and many other medical associations that had just resolved to adopt the metric system. The Navy Department adopted the system exclusively for its medical work in 1878. By 1894 the War Department had taken the same step. The U.S. Bureau of the Public Health Service joined the growing number of users in 1902. Between 1877 and 1887, Congress considered several pieces of legislation dealing with increased use of the metric system, but all proposals were tabled for lack of public support.<sup>86</sup>

An attempt to convert the whole nation was made in 1896, and for a short while it appeared that it might succeed. Representative Dennis Hurley of Brooklyn introduced a bill providing that in 1899 metric would become "the only legal system. . . recognized in the United States."<sup>87</sup> Excited by such a golden opportunity, Dewey widely distributed circulars and letters printed under his official title as the secretary of the University of the State of New York and Director of the State Library, stressing the reasons and needs for support for this important issue, and confiding that:

I am sure that the great majority of the presidents of our colleges and the principals of our academies will take pleasure in signing the inclosed petition and in securing the names of

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<sup>85</sup>"Progress," Bulletin of the American Metric Bureau 29/30 (Nov./Dec. 1878): 453.

<sup>86</sup>U. S. Department of Commerce, National Bureau of Standards, A Metric America, NBS Special Pubn. No. 345 (1971), p. 14.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

prominent citizens for forwarding it within the next three days to his congressman, or to any member of either house whom he may know better. It is a service to education that we ought all to be glad to render.<sup>88</sup>

Subsequently the bill passed the House by the bare margin of 119 to 117. But, unfortunately, action begot reaction:

Immediately, opponents forced a reconsideration and launched an attack stressing the difficulty of making a change. Foreseeing defeat, the Committee chairman had the bill sent back to his Committee, and there it died.

One contemporary report said that the Hurley bill failed because other Congressmen had not been fully briefed. Another claimed that too many Congressmen were afraid of adverse reaction from farmers and tradesmen in an election year.<sup>89</sup>

From 1896 to 1906, more than a dozen bills dealing with the metric system were proposed, but nothing was passed. Educators and scientists continued to support the issue and kept the subject alive in Congress. In 1906 Dewey left his Albany position and devoted full-time to the development of the Lake Placid Club. At this time all metric advocates seemed to give up the fight and no proposal was ever heard in Congress.

While Dewey suppressed his public metric activities he was fulfilling all his metric dreams in the development of his private Lake Placid Club. He examined the blueprints and the equipment day and night, armed with his perpetual measurement stick and tape--in metric, of course. Later he was able to inform the secretary of the new Metric Association when asked to join the new Metric League:

We have always used metric measures for our standard sizes of papers, files, rooms, etc. We are building 3 new malls and all

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<sup>88</sup> Complete copy of letter is in Appendix E.

<sup>89</sup> U. S. Department of Commerce, A Metric America, p. 16.

will be in even meters, the main one 5 m wide. Of course put me down for the Metric League; also Lake Placid Club, and L P C Stores, inc.<sup>90</sup>

He was credited with the creation of the "picture window" now so commonly used in homes. Of course, the size was in metrics in the private Club construction. The story goes:

The Club was ridiculed for one sheet of plate glass in its first cottage, but it insisted it was a crime to put opaque wood between the eyes and more magnificent scenery than any artist could ever paint. They called it a "picture window." Today the Club has over an acre of plate glass; its best views being framed in picture windows  $1\frac{1}{2} \times 4$  meters (5 x 13 ft) . . . all put in by the experienced Club shops.<sup>91</sup>

One of the important "seed sowing activities" fully supported by the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation founded by the Deweys was metrication. When the Metric Association met in Lake Placid Club, July 10-12, 1925, the highlight of the conference was a 70 kilometer automobile ride after a "metric dinner," while Dewey gave a speech on "Sowing Metric Seed."

The Metric Association was formed on December 27, 1916 at Columbia University by a new generation of metric advocates. The leaders of the group were: George F. Kunz, mineralogist and president of the Tiffany Company, Arthur B. Kennelly, professor of electrical engineering, Harvard, Samuel W. Stratton, president of M.I.T., Theodore Miller, De Laval Separator Co., and other scientists and industrialists. Promoting metrication by similar methods and materials used by Dewey forty years ago, the Association drew most of its support from groups that had tended

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<sup>90</sup> Melvil Dewey to Howard Richards, January 18, 1923, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>91</sup> John Willy, "Lake Placid Club," Hotel Monthly 31 (October 1923): 58.



to be pro-metric in the past -- namely, educators, scientists, and members of such professions as medicine, engineering, and pharmacy.

In 1922 Dewey renewed his public activities by joining the Association. Two years later, he became a member of the Executive Committee and was made chairman of the Metric Education Committee. The statement of the Education Committee as revised by Dewey reads as follows:

The Metric Education Committee will encourage writing articles for the Education Press; suggest simple, interesting methods of teaching the metric system; cooperate with school boards and education associations in furthering the metric movement.<sup>92</sup>

Thus once again, in his seventies, Dewey was busy writing articles and delivering speeches for the movement. On December 28, 1925, Dewey was honored at the annual meeting of the Association for his "long and continuous metric advocacy . . . we should not forget that we owe him a debt for his work as the first pioneer."<sup>93</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the comprehensive twentieth yearbook of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, entitled The Metric System of Weights and Measures compiled by the Committee on the Metric System,<sup>94</sup> F. A. P. Barnard and Dewey's names never appeared once. The compiler of the book, J. T. Johnson, president of the Metric Association and chairman of the mathematics department of Chicago Teachers College at the time, never mentioned the Metric Association.

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<sup>92</sup>Melvil Dewey to Mildred Harrigan (Member, Advisory Board of Metric Association), September 20, 1925. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>93</sup>"Report for immediate release of the annual meeting of the Metric Association at Kansas City, Missouri, December 28, 1925," p. 4. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>94</sup>National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Twentieth Yearbook: The Metric System of Weights and Measures (New York: Teachers College, Bureau of Publications, 1948).

nor the American Metric Bureau throughout the three hundred pages of the publication.

Even though the anti-metric forces, with financial and political backing from a large portion of the nation's major manufacturers and conservative groups, overwhelmed the voices of the Metric Association, the Association managed to survive. On October 3, 1927, the aging Dewey was able to inform the educators in the annual meeting of New York School Superintendents at Lake Placid Club that: "My classmate, Fred H. Gillet, will again introduce in the Senate the bill of metric measures in all buying and selling." But then the metric movement was fading; with the onset of the Depression, such a reform question was shoved into the background.

Yet Dewey the militant reformer knew neither Depression nor opposition. In 1931 when the national crisis threatened the very existence of both the Metric Association and the Lake Placid Club, Dewey wrote the following letter to the treasurer of the Metric Association:

"Dear Roberts

"It wd be a shame to giv up MA work. Nearli everione is under greater presure than ever befor & I can understand yur need of retrenchment & the greater defikulti in raizing funds. But it wd hurt the jeneral cauz & our unscrupulus enemies wd quote suspension of work as a surrender to their propaganda for the absurd old mezures.

"Yu don't get the point about simpler speling. We hav a small fund from which I oferd to giv yu \$100 a year if yu used a fu of the simpler forms I propozd. I can't use this muni except becauz of aktual adoptions. I just had a letr from a magazine that with sum hesitation accepted a gift of \$100 & has used the speling I rekomended to yu for a year. The editor writes just as I expekted that not 1 singl criticism has been made. Yu ar simpli skared for fear sumbodi wil criticyz. They sed Literary Digest wd ruin its circulation if it dared adopt simpler spelings & yet it has beaten the world with its stedili growing record.

"Keep MA alyv & don't giv a chance to the heathen to say we hav struk our flag. If we can't do what we wd lyk, do the best yu can with funds availabl.

"Cordiali,

"Melvil Dewey"<sup>95</sup>

Only half a year after this letter was written, the tenacious educational reformer left his self-ordained mission, with tasks still to be carried on. But since the death of the old soldier, both spelling reform and metric education quickly faded away, almost without any trace in history. The twelve NEA words have been mostly forgotten by contemporary educators; today metric education is considered a new movement by school teachers. Whatever Melvil Dewey did in those days are undone and no longer remembered by this generation.

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<sup>95</sup>Melvil Dewey to Frederic L. Roberts, June 11, 1931, Melvil Dewey Papers.

## CHAPTER V

### UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS

Throughout his life, Dewey aspired and stood out as an educational reformer; and he did succeed, as a private citizen, by unconventional approaches and to varied extent, in publicizing educational reforms to the public. Paradoxically, for eleven years he assumed a patronage job as the top educational administrator of the State of New York. In order to defend and justify his own position and that of his employers, the Board of Regents of New York State University, he was obliged to protect that governmental establishment, a dubious state educational tradition called contemporary New York Governor David B. Hill "as a purely ornamental body, and . . . a sort of pleasant retreat for respectable gentlemen of literary tendencies."<sup>1</sup>

Working loyally under such a situation, inevitably, Dewey had to fight bitterly with conflicting people and issues in the political arena. The situation became so bad by the end of 1899 that Dewey had to resign from his major function to save the University system. During those eleven years Dewey had created some successful educational programs but circumstances he had to work under required a man of un-

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<sup>1</sup>New York (State) Governors, Messages from the Governors, Comprising Executive Communications to the Legislature and Other Papers Relating to Legislation from the Organization of the First Colonial Assembly in 1683 to and Including the Year 1906, with Notes, ed. Charles Z. Lincoln, v. 8, David B. Hill (Albany: Lyon Co., State Printer, 1909), p. 40.

usual tact and political survival skills which Dewey was never known to possess. He tried hard to hang on, somehow, six more years and some scandals later, he was forced completely out of the state government system. As a result, his educational contributions and reforms during those seventeen years were overshadowed by controversies and thus neglected completely by historians.

#### The Regents and the University System

In order to understand Dewey's situation, it is necessary to study the educational system of New York and examine how Dewey was elected secretary of the University of the State of New York: Shortly after the British left the Colony and New York attained statehood, an educational board was organized in 1784. It was modeled after the European system and named the University of the State of New York, based on the foundation of King's College, then renamed Columbia College. This new Board of Regents was empowered to found, endow and control schools and colleges throughout the State. After three years the new system was proved impracticable, and Columbia was separated and returned to its own board of trustees. The Regents were left alone with only certain inspectional authority but severed from all direct management or ownership of any college or school, except the State Library and the State Museum. Subsequently, elementary schools assisted by public funds were placed under the Superintendent of Common Schools and, after 1854, the Department of Public Instruction. Such traditional New York educational organization led Governor David Hill to suggest in 1886 that:

I think there is no necessity for the official existence of the Board of Regents. The corporate name is deceptive and misleading. Its powers and duties can be intrusted to other and appropriate hands without detriment to the public interest, thereby saving to the State the annual expense of its maintenance and dispensing with the anomaly of a two-headed educational system and the confusion of a divided and sometimes conflicting superintendence in the same public schools. . . .

I recommend that the Board of Regents be abolished; that its powers and duties relating to the schools be transferred to the Department of Public Instruction, and that its other powers and duties necessary to be provided for be transferred to other appropriate departments and offices already established and maintained by the State.<sup>2</sup>

Similar messages to the state legislature were repeated by Governor Hill in 1887 and 1888. Judging from the circumstances, the governor was right in his recommendation. Even though the legislature took no action following the governor's recommendation, the Regents naturally felt themselves on the defensive and sought to improve and preserve themselves. In early 1888, while working as librarian of Columbia College and professor of library economy, Dewey was invited by regent Whitelaw Reid to serve as a consulting librarian for the Board on the occasion of the relocation and reorganization of the New York State Library which was under the Regents' jurisdiction. For six months Dewey inspected the new Capitol building, the organization and management of the State Library, the possibilities of improving and expanding library services to the people and state government of New York, and as requested by Reid, "the other side of the Regents' work which I [Dewey] felt to be worth special attention." Painstakingly, Dewey prepared an elaborate program covering not only the State Library but also steps to strengthen the position and powers of the Regents.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

This broad proposal is an excellent demonstration of Dewey's educational ambition and points of view. As a matter of fact, most of the plans of this proposal were carried out by Dewey during his seventeen years of tenure in the state government, and many of them were adopted by other states later. This original document, therefore, is of significant historical interest and educational value for the state of New York as well as for the entire nation. Even after a century, as his influence has waned and things have changed, his proposals still seem fresh and practicable.

When Dewey first presented his plans to the Board of Regents in 1888, his intention was to revive the University of the State of New York and to seek an opportunity for himself to bring out his own reform ideas to improve educational conditions for the people. Today, the university system is well established in New York, and educational conditions are much better, but educators both within and without the university system are still eagerly pursuing the same goals by the same approaches initially proposed by Dewey.

The original Dewey proposals, therefore, warrant fuller examination to manifest his primary educational goals and subsequent achievements. In order to strengthen the legal foundations of the University and justify the continuing existence of the Board, Dewey advised the Regents:

"1. To be sure, before taking any action that there was full and proper authority in the laws of the state so that no critic could say a progressive administration was 'taking the bits in its teeth' and exceeding its proper functions and authority.

"2. To absolutely avoid all entangling alliances of politics so that neither party could possibly have excuse for partisan opposition.

"3. To maintain above possibility of criticism the dignity of the Regents of the University. . . ."3

Dewey then went on to outline his new library program and extension education plan for the State of New York:

"1. BUILDING. Make your sixth (6th) of the \$20,000,000 Capitol into ideal state library quarters as nearly as the limitations allow. . . .

"2. REORGANIZATION. A complete reorganization of the methods . . . is important. . . .

"3. LEGISLATIVE FUNCTIONS. It should be made the very best working legislative library, so that every officer of the state could with the least possible delay get any information or assistance to be had in print. The smallness of the present use is astounding, and only skilful work will lead the average legislator, whose non-scholarly habits I fully appreciate, to become a frequenter and user of the library. . . and just as soon as these men from both parties have learned that they can get promptly at the library any available facts on any question under discussion there will be no further trouble in securing any reasonable appropriation for an institution that is daily proving itself of direct value to the individual members.

"4. STATE REPOSITORY. It should be the best existing repository of everything pertaining to N.Y. state. . . .

"5. SELECTION OF BOOKS. Its growth should be better balanced. After recognizing its special character and the kind of additions that indicates, there should be, not a building up on the lines of the librarian's personal taste, but catholic provision for all who have the right to use the state collection.

"6. PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY. . . . To every citizen of the state this splendid collection in its splendid home, all paid for by the state, should be the real university 'where any person may find information on any subject.' . . . Books, rooms, and facilities are already provided. Space has been left (in addition to the regular provision in the reading room) where upward of 50 scholars at once may carry on investigations at private tables. . . .

"7. PERIPATETIC BOOKS. In this same spirit it should be arranged to send to any college, school or even responsible individual, copies of books which are not otherwise attainable because of rarity or cost. . . .

"8. PERIPATETIC LIBRARIES. . . . to put in operation a scheme of travelling libraries . . . to send for a year to any community, meeting certain reasonable conditions, a library of say a thousand carefully selected volumes, cataloged, in cases and with a model system of lending so as to be readily carried on by any intelligent novice in library work. . . . Clearly these would be the best entering wedges to prepare the way for permanent libraries.

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<sup>3</sup>Melvil Dewey to Whitelaw Reid, November 25, 1888, Melvil Dewey Papers.



"9. STATE GUIDANCE AND SUPERVISION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES. . . . the time has come when the state must recognize the work of the library, as more than a generation ago it recognized the work of the schools. This is the greatest work at once before you. It will require time and skill but its doing will surely mark a new era in popular education. One definite assistance . . . is for you to have trained assistants on the state library staff, one of whom can be detailed for a week or a month to go to any town that may ask such help, and start a new library or reorganize an old one on the lines that will enable them to do the most good with their funds and opportunities. . . . Just as N.Y. has led all the states in meeting the demand for trained teachers by founding no less than ten normal schools, so you will be sure to have at least one center for training competent librarians, without whom no satisfactory library progress is possible. Fortunately this training can be so combined with your own library work as to impose a very slight financial burden.

"10. STATE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL BUREAU. . . . The papers and discussions at last year's national convention of librarians will give an idea of the work to be done. A part of that can be done cheaply and wisely in your library to the great gain of all libraries and scholars throughout the state. Questions, to which the answers may be readily found in the great state library, without such facilities become serious stumbling blocks in investigations. Ten minutes of the time of a trained library aid may save months of weary work to some teachers remote from the great libraries.

"11. STATE CLEARING HOUSE FOR DUPLICATES. . . . Each library of the state could ship to Albany all its duplicates, which would be appraised by a disinterested expert, who from the storehouse of duplicates would send back an equal value. . . .

In connection with this distribution so systematized, great gifts to the libraries of the state would be sure to come. Books are constantly published by societies, authors, etc., of which a certain number are to be given away where they will do most good. . . . Happily for general interests just in proportion as the state library serves the entire state, instead of the one city where it is located, it strengthens its claim to public appreciation and support.<sup>4</sup>

Following this "check list of 'things to be done'" in connection with the State Library, Dewey went one bid step further and reported to the Regents as follows:

You asked me also to note anything on the other side of the Regents' work which I felt to be worthy special attention. In planning the new offices for the Regents in place of those now

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

taken by the library, I have been compelled to look into some of the other work and have given it not a little thought.<sup>5</sup>

Thus Dewey began to propose a series of reforms aiming to extend the powers of the Regents and hence the educational services to the people of the state:

"a. EXAMINATIONS. There are wonderful possibilities in the Regents' examinations which ought to include higher work. . . . The system might be carefully revised to secure the obvious great good and eliminate as far as possible the evils attributed to them by the critics of over-examination.

"b. CONFERRING DEGREES. I am assured by men like President Barnard, to whom I submitted these ideas for criticism, that instituting on a high plane, with proper restrictions, examinations for all degrees, so that any man or woman, whether college bred or trained at home, might receive recognition of his acquirements, would result in making the degree of the university more highly prized than that of any other institution. These could be conferred at your 'commencement' which the University Convocation was designed to be and the effect would be great all through the state in stimulating our college graduates to keep up their studies and try to attain higher rank. Few of the ambitious scholars can afford the expense of residence at a university, after completing their college course, but if they could earn their degrees as here suggested they would go on with work which would soon have an appreciable influence on the higher scholarship of the state.

"c. FELLOWSHIPS. . . . I have no doubt that men of means can be found to endow fellowships yielding say \$500 a year, to be assigned to the most promising and deserving applicants from all parts of the state, to enable them to spend one or more years in study and investigation in the state library and museum where they could find facilities which no college could offer. For the vast majority of topics the library is the real laboratory where all the higher work must be done, e.g., philosophy, ethics, religion, political science and economy, law, education, commerce, languages and literature, history, biography and travels. . . . My only plea is that existing facilities be used instead of lying stagnant.

"d. UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION. This can be made, by well-directed effort, much the most important higher educational gathering of the year in America. . . .

"e. UNIVERSITY EXTENSION. This remarkable work, the most significant and far reaching done by Oxford and Cambridge in all the centuries of their existence is just taking root in America. The Regents better than any other body in the U.S. are fitted to introduce and maintain it. . . . You would be sure of the hearty cooperation of the more progressive professors in all the colleges.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

Finally as to your third responsibility, the State Museum of Natural History.

"f. SAFETY. This great collection is in imminent danger of destruction by fire, being singularly exposed. Its loss would mean more than money and immediate steps should be taken to house it in a fire-proof building. By happy chance I find ample Museum quarters (among the finest in the country) available . . . The fifth floor of the Capitol, running into the great roof, affords four times the present space occupied by the Museum. . . . I have examined it in detail with the Commissioner of the Capitol who assures me that the plan is entirely practicable and can be carried out with very little change in the building. . . . This would have the great advantage of bringing all three of the Regents' departments together and would enable them readily to consolidate all into the University of the State of New York, making in fact the ideal people's university, a great library and a great museum, with degree-conferring powers, but without any direct instruction. . . .

The influence through the state of this new prominence would greatly strengthen your hold on popular sympathy and support.

"g. LECTURES. A course of scientific lectures ought to be given in connection with the museum, specially during the sessions of the legislature when some of the members would attend and become interested. I find since noting this need, a law authorizing and requiring such lectures but no evidence that it has been complied with.

"h. AID TO COLLEGE AND SCHOOL MUSEUMS. A great help at small cost is possible by exchanging duplicate specimens, making up small working cabinets, and in general helping the small museums of the state something as the state library should help the librarian. . . .

"i. CONSOLIDATING SCIENTIFIC WORK. Clearly the State Museum is the natural center for all the scientific work of the state (excepting engineering, etc.), i.e., state botanist, entomologist, geologist, paleontologist, etc., should all be part of the scientific staff.

Finally and perhaps as more important to the success of your future work than anything else is the need of greater solidarity. There seems to have been going on a centrifugal action, dissipating energy and breaking to pieces, where a centripetal force was needed to weld together all these diverse interests, into one strong smoothly working organization. Like the Indian's bundle of sticks, separated they can easily be broken, and any department may be crushed out of existence by such action as recently killed the important state survey. Together, they will do much more good and be safer from the accidents of politics."<sup>6</sup>

Having presented his programs to save and expand the future of the Regents, Dewey then underscored the necessity of finding the right

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

man to undertake such reform programs. He strongly emphasized the qualifications for this top administrator, and thus indirectly suggested to the Regents that he was the right man to carry out the programs himself. As he concluded his long letter, he added:

In my intense interest in this whole matter I have ventured to verify my own judgment by taking into confidence a few eminent educators, including President Barnard and Henry Barnard, the first U.S. Commissioner of Education, and others. Every man consulted has expressed to me his firm belief that this great work as outlined in this long letter, is entirely practicable and that if carried through it will mark an epoch in the higher education of N.Y. and its influence will spread in time to every state of the Union.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, a letter from Henry Barnard, dated November 6, 1888, indicated the grand old educator's full approval:

Your plan for the extension and expansion of the State Library, and the concentration and unification of the various literary and scientific trusts committed to Regents of the University, is grand, and in your hands perfectly practicable. The immediate results, . . . will at once bring the Board to the front, and in the many ways which your fertile brain has already suggested, bring it into vitalizing connection with every progressive institution of the State. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Another letter by Barnard a month later further praised Dewey's abilities and suitability for this special position:

Your intense earnestness and power of work and of getting willing work out of others will be an inspiration all along the old lines of office work. . . .

I feel quite sure that more school men of every grade of work will visit Albany to see what you are about and get familiar with your aims and methods and go away "bit with enthusiasm" in five years after you are once in office than in any decade within the past fifty years.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Barnard to Melvil Dewey, November 6, 1888, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Barnard to Melvil Dewey, December 6, 1888, Melvil Dewey Papers.

A family friend of Mrs. Dewey, ex-president Rutherford B. Hayes, also expressed a similar opinion: "The New York authorities will do a wise thing to appoint you. But you ought not to accept a salary less than that you now get. . . ."10

Evidently the Regents were highly impressed by Dewey's proposals and all the recommendations sent to them by Dewey's eminent friends. They offered Dewey almost every key position within the organization of the University: Secretary and Treasurer of the University of the State of New York, Director of the State Library, and Director of State Library School; later he was also made Director of the University Extension Department and Director of the Public Libraries Department. The Regents also offered him financial betterment and expressed their complete trust in him and his programs. From their perspective, it seemed that the University system was getting the right person in the right place at the right time; from Dewey's perspective, with his future at Columbia overshadowed by various unpleasant charges, the opportunity in Albany promised to be a wide open field to him for the actualization of all his educational dreams and ambitions. Indeed, in the state of New York and in the life of Dewey, a new era had thus begun.

#### Educational Legislation and Professional Preparation

Dewey left the office of college librarian at Columbia and assumed his new duties in Albany on January 1, 1889. Incidentally, on the same day, Governor David Hill again called for the abolition of the Board of Regents. Apparently the game of state politics was a

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<sup>10</sup>Rutherford B. Hayes to Melvil Dewey, December 10, 1888.  
Copy of document is in Appendix F.

little more complex than Dewey had thought. He soon discovered that the Governor had already filed a memorandum with the senate on March 20 to transfer the control of teacher-training classes from the Regents to Andrew S. Draper, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the bill was approved in April, 1889.

On April 15, Governor Hill commented on the bill: "It is in line with, and carried out in part, the recommendation made in my annual message transmitted to the Legislature . . . ." <sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the Governor objected to and disapproved Dewey's requests for ten thousand dollars to reorganize and recatalog the State Library. He also denied additional funding to purchase books. <sup>12</sup> It was recorded that "The Governor and the Legislature were not in political accord, and there were frequent differences of opinion between them on public questions." <sup>13</sup> For the preservation and revitalization of the University system, Dewey realized that he had to put through some new laws to legalize the place of the University so that it would not be subjected to the whim and pleasure of the legislators or the governor.

With this purpose in mind, Dewey within six months reviewed the existing laws concerning higher education in the State of New York and drafted a proposal to consolidate sixty-two conflicting laws into a coherent body of state statutes. Obviously, Dewey understood that in politics one has to give in order to get. In Dewey's proposal, he restricted the power of the Regents over institutions but expanded the

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<sup>11</sup>New York (State) Governors, Messages from the Governors, v. 8, p. 791.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 862.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. iii.

authority of the Regents in other areas. This proposal so pleased the institutions, the legislators, and the Governor that it was passed as chapter 529 of the new state statutes. Since the major problem involving the legal position of the Regents was ironed out, instead of abolishing the Board of Regents, Governor Hill and the legislators agreed to increase the appropriations for the development of local libraries and museums, and these agencies were turned over to the Board of Regents exclusively. The Board was also authorized to hold examinations for all intending students of law as well as of medicine.

In 1892, a comprehensive "University Law" relating to the University of the State of New York was introduced by Senator James Edwards, chairman of the committee on education. The bill was so thoroughly prepared that it did not receive a single amendment and passed unanimously in the senate, and without a dissenting vote in the assembly. This new law, chapter 378 of the state statutes, was the result of three years' study and repeated drafts by Dewey and the statutory revision commission of New York. The completed draft was first presented to a roomful of delegates from institutions of higher education of the state for minute discussion and revision; then the regents considered the resulting draft in detail. Finally every proposed amendment in the codification was either approved unanimously by all institutions, the regents, and the statutory revisers, or was left in exactly the form of the existing law. The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography summed up the situation as follows:

Dewey and Hill worked in harmony and a number of reforms in educational policies and methods were inaugurated. Perhaps his most important and far reaching single contribution to educational

progress was the careful revision and amplification of the laws of New York pertaining to higher education, including libraries, passed in 1892 as the "University Law."<sup>14</sup>

Some outstanding features of the University Law, in the words of Dewey, included these amendments and revisions:

It makes the law much clearer and shorter by omitting such matter which was duplicated or is now covered by the codes or other parts of the revision.

It more closely defines and restricts the powers of the regents in many cases. This was asked by the institutions and cheerfully granted by the regents, thus protecting the institutions against hasty or arbitrary exercise of power, and the regents against the criticism that their powers were too autocratic.

New protections are made against fraud in educational matters, such as selling and counterfeiting diplomas, issuing fraudulent degrees and similar impositions on the public.

It throws new and strong restrictions about the use of the state's money and about the care of books and apparatus bought at state expense, protecting the state against loss, waste or misappropriation.

It requires chancellor and vice-chancellor to serve without salary; all regents to take the oath of office; the secretary to give bonds for \$10,000; . . .

In 28, institutions with only provisional charters are forbidden to confer degrees.

In 29, the unlimited power of the regents under present law to alter, amend or revoke charters has been carefully restricted, fully meeting the objections of institutions that they were exposed to the danger of arbitrary action . . .

In 31, institutions discontinuing educational operations are prevented from escaping taxation and otherwise abusing former privileges. . . .

Requires trustees to give one week's notice to the accused before expelling a professor or teacher. . . .

35-51, embodies the best model of a state law for public libraries and museums which could be made after tabulating the laws of all the different states and discussing the draft for two years before various library associations and clubs. It allows public libraries to be established by majority vote, but requires for abolition a majority vote for two successive meetings; it requires libraries exempt from taxation to be forever free to the citizens;

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<sup>14</sup>The National Encyclopaedia of American Biography, 1933 ed., s.v. "Dewey, Melvil (le Louis Kossuth)."



it provides for legal recovery of books which borrowers refuse to return to public libraries; it forbids any state money being apportioned to any library failing to provide for the safety and public usefulness of its books; . . . <sup>15</sup>

The old district library law was also revised, and districts were required to duplicate the state grants. The result of this revision was better utilization of state grants and a marked increase of libraries and collections.<sup>16</sup> In general, the new chapter 378 provided greater security and regulation for the state against any form of abuse in educational matters, thus guiding the healthy growth and development of state educational facilities.

When the National Educational Association held its Annual convention at Saratoga Springs, New York, in 1892, the hosting Dewey, representing the NEA Local Executive Committee and the University of the State of New York, was able to inform the participants as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen: I have the pleasure of giving a welcome that you can have in no other state. It is a welcome from a State University without a student, without a professor, without a campus, without alumni; and yet we believe in New York that this peculiar University has a great work to do, and that other states will hereafter find that the work can be done better in this way than in any other. . . .<sup>17</sup>

So Dewey went on to praise the system and the state of education in New York; then he announced proudly:

I will mention as our latest contribution that which is now one of the established laws, and which rids the law of and protects the public against legal technicalities such as cost the city of New York the most magnificent library ever planned. That

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<sup>15</sup>Melvil Dewey, "The Act to Revise and Consolidate the Laws Relating to the University of the State of New York, 1892," Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>16</sup>See page 161, Table 1.

<sup>17</sup>National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Forty-first Annual Meeting (New York: NEA Press, 1893), p. 48.

law proposes to give, and does give, full authority to any man or woman to leave his property in any way he may choose for the benefit of the public, and so it cannot be taken away from the public by a technicality. Secondly, under the library law, established fifty-three years ago, there is given \$55,000 for the establishment of a system of school libraries, under such restrictions as experience has shown to be wise. Third, the most important of the new university law, which replaces seventy laws that have grown up in the last century, and puts within the compass of a dozen pages a new law, gives all the institutions of higher education in the State a recognition for the first time. . . . This new law makes it, for the first time, a State's prison offense for any man or association or corporation to use improperly the name, or do business under the name, of a university or college, or to sell or traffic in degrees or credentials of educational institutions, feloniously and with intent to deceive the public, and further provides that any man who shall represent that he holds these credentials shall be held guilty of a misdemeanor and be punishable by imprisonment.<sup>18</sup>

As the state legislature adopted the University Law, the legal foundation of the University of the State of New York was secured. The Board of Regents became a coordinate part of the state educational system, having the power to receive and to give aid to other parts. In addition to its advisory functions of visiting and reporting on higher educational institutions, the Regents could exercise some legislative powers to enforce policies and regulations. With Dewey taking the reins, the University began more and more innovative programs. In 1891, a Department of University Extension was established with Dewey as the director; in 1892, a Public Libraries Department was created, also headed by Dewey. Both departments expanded very rapidly and gained popular support.

With the rising influence of Dewey in state education work, his strong counterpart, Andrew Sloane Draper, finally resigned from the Department of Public Instruction and took a position as Superintendent

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

of Schools of Cleveland, Ohio, in 1892, incidental though that might have been. Charles Skinner, the succeeding State Superintendent was not as aggressive and powerful as Draper. Thus when the new state constitution was adopted on January 1, 1895, the Board of Regents was made a constitutional body while the first definite constitutional provision for a state school system was formed. The new constitution prohibited aid to denominational schools and regulated various state funds. On the other hand, the Horton Act passed the same year gave the Regents an automatic increasing appropriation to enable them to aid academies and high schools of the state. The Regents were also authorized to charter colleges or academies upon evidence that these institutions had sufficient funds and endowments to warrant such action. The Regents were also required to visit and inspect all such institutions and to report their conditions to the legislature. As a result of this favorable legislation and cooperation from the Regents' office, the number of such schools increased dramatically and their state appropriations were multiplied accordingly.

With Dewey as the top administrative executive, the University established standards and examinations for graduation from the secondary schools of the state, issuing Regents' certificates showing the subjects passed and the units made. The tens of thousands of certificates signed personally by Dewey bore witness to his concern for the education of children. From 1889 to 1899, during the years Dewey served as the secretary, the following number of high school certificates were signed by him personally:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Dawe, Dewey, p. 214.

1889	13005	1895	34559
1890	11892	1896	22735
1891	16894	1897	26197
1892	21077	1898	32948
1893	23227	1899	37354
1894	28843		

These figures show clearly the increase of students graduating from high schools. Understandably, it was the spirit of the age that demanded a secondary school which, like the elementary schools, should be common to all, free from all religious and denominational influences, and devoted alike to training either students who wished to enter the business world or who wished to enter college. These objectives coincided with the educational views of Melvil Dewey. Besides, traditionally the academies had been limited to boys, to the wealthy and culturally-privileged class, whereas the public high schools provided equal educational opportunities to the poor and the girls -- an ideal for which Dewey had always striven. While the number of secondary schools and students multiplied drastically during the 1890's, the Regents office strove to maintain high academic standards by inspection, appropriations and aids, regulations and charters, and the Regents academic examinations, held in about seven hundred secondary schools in March each year.

With the marked success of the Board in the administration of high schools and libraries, the University was entrusted with duties and responsibilities other than those at first designated by the state; it not only came to have supervision over the development of technical, scientific and professional schools, but also over the administration of laws, and regulation of admission standards and certification of these professions. The steady increase in requirements for entrance to

these professions and certification for practice placed the state of New York in the lead in safe-guarding public health and educational standards of certain professions. The following regulations were initiated and administered by the University after Dewey became the secretary of the Board and before the passage of the New York educational unification law making Andrew S. Draper the Commissioner of Education in 1904:

Medicine. An act passed in 1893 fixed the following conditions, legally regulated by the University:

No student may enter a medical school unless he has pursued a four year high school course or its equivalent . . . To obtain a license to practice medicine a candidate must have studied medicine for four full years . . . in a medical school registered as maintaining a satisfactory standard, and subsequent to graduation must pass a licensing examination.<sup>20</sup>

Law. An act passed in 1894 specified that

. . . the University is responsible only for the preliminary education of law students, and the requirements fixed by the Court of Appeals prescribe a three year high school course or its equivalent as the minimum condition for entrance to the study of law. The examinations for entrance to the bar are conducted by the State Board of Law Examiners.<sup>21</sup>

Dentistry. The law passed in 1895 stated that

. . . students desiring to enter a school of dentistry in the State of New York must have completed a four year high school course or its equivalent as a condition of entrance. The course in a registered dental school is three years in length and subsequent to graduation therefrom a student must pass the licensing examination. . . .<sup>22</sup>

Veterinary medicine. The law passed in 1895 required two years of high school work as the preliminary requirement for entrance to a veterinary college. It further stated:

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<sup>20</sup> New York, Education Department, First Annual Report of the Education Department, for the School Year Ending July 31, 1904, Transmitted to the Legislature February 15, 1905, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

A student meeting these preliminary qualifications must pursue a course of study in a registered veterinary college of three years duration, and subsequent to graduation from such college pass a licensing examination. . . .<sup>23</sup>

In an article published in 1927, almost four decades after these landmark educational reforms, Dewey recalled his agonies and triumphs during those years:

Just think of it! Here was a profession which had the health and the lives of people in their keeping. Yet it was as easy to become a physician as to become a blacksmith.

If a young fellow thought he'd like the job, all he had to do was to 'ride with a doctor,' as they called it, for a few months. He would hitch up the doctor's horse, and blanket it when a call was made. Perhaps he was allowed to go in, listen to the account of the patient's symptoms, and hear the doctor's directions. He read -- and fell asleep over -- the doctor's scant supply of medical books. And finally, after paying some state official a hundred dollars -- or ten dollars, if that was all he had -- he could hang out his own shingle and practice medicine himself; practice it until he perhaps learned a little by his experimenting!

This sounds incredible, but it is a fact. . . .

Then there were the dentists. When I raised the standards for admission to that profession, a delegation of dental practitioners came to me to protest. . . . In spite of themselves, their profession was put on a scientific basis.

The alleged 'degrees' given by business 'colleges,' and by some other so-called 'colleges' and 'universities' were then a disgrace to the state. We had a law enacted forbidding the use of the words 'college' and 'university' except by bona fide institutions of higher learning. Immediately, the heads of a lot of these fake colleges swarmed to my office, to protest against the bill.

'It's no use!' I told them. 'That law has got to be obeyed. If you are willing to put yourselves on a sound basis, I will stand by you and help you. If you won't do that, you will have to leave this state.'

In ways like these, we raised the standards of education all along the line. But I had to fight every inch of the way.<sup>24</sup>

If such reminiscences of an old man were questionable, numerous personal correspondence and notes in Dewey's archives confirm his accounts of fighting to raise the educational standards of these pro-

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Gray, "That Darned Literary Fellow Across the Lake," p. 130.

fessions. The official minutes of the Regents of the University during those years further corroborate Dewey's role and the Regents' efforts in each of these educational and legislative reforms that took place in the state of New York.

Following the successful passage and practice of these educational laws, Dewey moved on to the promotion of "higher business education." Speaking to a special group of leading business school men one evening, Dewey pointed out that

there has been an old fashion in colleges for many generations of making a distinction of two classes of men, of sheep and goats, the men who were going to enter the professions and the men who were going into business -- an implication that in some way a business calling was on a lower plane than the professional calling. . . .

For business education on this plane there has been thus far almost no provision. . . .<sup>25</sup>

As a true educational reformer, therefore, Dewey went on to say

I believe, with all my heart, in the thorough general education as a basis for all professional work, but from a life devoted to higher education, I come to you with the conviction that nothing will do more to help our present schools and colleges than the establishment and maintenance in the highest degree of efficiency of schools of commerce . . . Such schools will create a new enthusiasm for education among a class who have for generations laid too little stress upon it. The esprit de corps created will lead to constant demands for higher standards, and we shall repeat the experience of law and medicine. . . .

Since the new laws went into effect, our records in the university show that there has been a three-fold increase in this State of boys and girls who have remained in the high school long enough to complete a course equivalent to the graduation standard of six years ago. The betterment of the professional business school in its various grades will, therefore, I am sure, bring to the academies and colleges and universities, not a rival, but a strong ally. . . .<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Higher Business Education," paper presented at a meeting of leading business schoolmen, n.p., n.d., Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

At the 1896 NEA convention, therefore, Dewey told the committee of business educators appointed to confer with him:

It was wise for the leading business schools of the country to ally themselves with the National Educational Association, to bring themselves into helpful and proper relations with the educational forces of the country.

Educated men and educational men are too much given to sneer at the business college. They need to know what you undertake to do, what you are doing, what are your standards.

There is an urgent need for drawing the line between the genuine and the fraudulent.

Let it begin with an entrance examination. Your schools should take rank with the law and medical schools. New York state has enacted a law establishing a grade of scholarship for those professional schools. After 1900 a student must complete a high school course before entering those schools, and that is none too high a standard for the business college. . . . And then a curriculum might be established which should include commercial geography, economics, civics, commercial law and many other kindred topics.

Give special courses to students who will not or cannot take your full course, and a special certificate for a single branch, as penmanship. But do not give a diploma to a student who has taken less than your full course, which should cover not less than two scholastic years, or their equivalent in previous training and attainment. . . .<sup>27</sup>

Speaking as a state inspector of institutions, Dewey went on to suggest:

There should be public inspection of business schools by properly constituted boards or departments of education.

By establishing a standard and maintaining it you will gain the recognition and approval of the educational world which your wide range of necessary, useful, intellectual labor should justly receive.<sup>28</sup>

As a result of this conference, it was determined that the University would inspect such private business schools; those found to maintain satisfactory standards and courses of study would be recognized and approved by the Regents as worthy of public confidence. As a fur-

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<sup>27</sup> National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Forty-fifth Annual Meeting (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1896), p. 833.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 834.



ther means of adding to the dignity of business education, the Regents offered state business credentials, to be granted only on examinations prepared and conducted by the University. As suggested earlier by Dewey, these credentials were of two classes -- diplomas and certificates, and based on examinations in the following subjects: Advanced bookkeeping, business arithmetic, business English, business practice and office methods, commercial law, commercial geography, stenography and type-writing, and so forth.

In New York, the first business syllabus was issued April 1899 and arranged essentially for the proprietary schools. It was, however, taken up almost immediately by the public high schools and academies, many of which began to organize four year commercial courses, thus leading to a curricular reform.<sup>29</sup>

Incidentally, those were the heydays of progressivism and curricular revisions in the history of American education. On one hand, vocational education and manual training were supported by many teachers, on the other, the college-oriented Committee of Ten (1892), the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (1895) and many other regional accreditation agencies were attempting to resolve the conflicts over college admission standards, curricula criteria, mission and goals of educational institutions. Dewey's efforts in the state and national educational organizations doubtlessly aided the professions in setting higher goals.

Around the turn of the century, facing the rapid growth of America as an industrial and commercial power, educators as well as the

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<sup>29</sup> New York (State), Education Department, First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1904, pp. 60-61.

public were somewhat confused about setting priorities. The newly discovered natural resources of the nation, the inventions of communication and transportation, and the triumph of industrialism and capitalism all combined to create an auspicious atmosphere for a new social and economic order. These social and economic forces also brought about a drastic evolution in "the fundamental conception of the universe, the outlooks upon man and his relation to nature and the conceptions of knowledge and learning."<sup>30</sup> New York, the Empire State of industries and commerce, was under strong pressure and demand for a new educational program to produce professional and technical workers, to prepare its citizens as well as immigrants for vocations and for life in a democratic society. Therefore, it is quite natural to find Dewey, the educational reformer who occupied the vantage ground as the chief administrator of the secondary and higher education system of New York, working zealously and energetically to promote quality as well as increased numbers of high schools, academies, vocational schools, colleges and professional institutions. In the Official Minutes of the Regents of the University During the Secretaryship of Melvil Dewey, 1889-99,<sup>31</sup> numerous discussions and debates appear year after year regarding the standards of the schools and the qualifications of the students, and Dewey's efforts to raise the standards by aid, by legislation, by examinations and inspections were apparent.<sup>32</sup> Needless to say, Dewey's

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<sup>30</sup> R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, A History of Education in American Culture (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953), p. 393.

<sup>31</sup> University of the State of New York, Official Minutes of the Regents of the University During the Secretaryship of Melvil Dewey, 1889-99 (Albany, N.Y.: University of the State of New York, 1900).

<sup>32</sup> Copies of supporting documents are in Appendixes G and H.

task was enormous and at times humanly impossible. Lawrence Cremin helps to explain in the following passage:

Whatever the high-minded philosophies that justified them, the schools of the 1890's were a depressing study in contrast. Everywhere, mundane problems of students, teachers, classrooms, and dollars had become overwhelming. . . .

As school budgets mounted, politicians were quick to recognize one more lucrative source of extra income. . . . Responsibility being difficult to define, corruption reared its ugly -- if familiar -- head. Teaching and administrative posts were bought and sold; school buildings . . . became expensive to build; and politics pervaded everything from the assignment of textbook contracts to the appointment of school superintendents. In short, the school system, like every other organ of the urban body politic, was having its growing pains.<sup>33</sup>

Even though holding a patronage position himself, Dewey proclaimed repeatedly that "the essential thing is freedom from politics,"<sup>34</sup> and "our supreme danger is that politics may be introduced into the University."<sup>35</sup> He also warned Governor Theodore Roosevelt that "education in this state should be kept absolutely free from the domination or interference of partizan politics."<sup>36</sup> But due to the position he occupied, his conflict with office-seekers and office-givers had been so continuous throughout the seventeen years that he became a constant target of unsatisfied politicians. During his tenure as secretary, the volume of examinations administered by the University grew from 20,660

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<sup>33</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pp. 20-21.

<sup>34</sup> Melvil Dewey to Theodore Roosevelt, 22 June 1899. Entire letter is in Appendix I.

<sup>35</sup> Melvil Dewey to Lyman Abbott, 6 December 1899. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>36</sup> Melvil Dewey to Theodore Roosevelt, 2 January 1900. Entire letter is in Appendix J.

papers a year to over 400,000, given in nearly one hundred subjects and held in more than three hundred different places in the state. The original methods of preparation of papers, printing, marking, distribution, collection and reporting of results became inadequate and were open to question.<sup>37</sup> In order to safeguard the examination papers against improper access, Dewey had the papers printed in a private printery at a much higher cost. Such "extravagance in public printing"<sup>38</sup> upset Governor Levi P. Morton so much that an act was passed later to regulate public printing for the state; official printing presses were established in the capitol so that the examination papers could be handled properly.

So much landmark legislation was proposed and enacted during this period, concerning the preparation and certification of various professions, that New York was more advanced than the other states in educational legislation and regulations. In many cases, the ideas and impetus came from Dewey the reformer who, as the executive secretary of the Board of Regents, actually exerted full control of the University of the State of New York. St. Clair McKelway, a board member from Brooklyn once admitted that

Dewey was the only man he knew who could get up before a body of men such as composed the Board of Regents, convince the board that a certain policy was the only policy to be adopted, have the board adopt that policy unanimously; and at a meeting of the same board a month later present a policy directly opposed to the one approved at the previous meeting, convince the board that that was the only course to pursue, have the board reverse itself and there and then vote unanimously to adopt the opposite policy -- leaving

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<sup>37</sup>Melvil Dewey to the Civil Service Commission, New York State, 22 November 1894. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>38</sup>New York (State) Governors, Messages from the Governors, v. 9, pp. 674-676.

the meeting greatly pleased with the result, with themselves, and with Dewey. That sort of thing Dewey could do almost any time.<sup>39</sup>

Apparently, Dewey was so powerful and respected by the regents that he became dominating and at times impatient with his employers. This was evidenced by the following letter to regent Pliny T. Sexton of Palmyra, New York:

When you come in my office we waste 2 hours in talk over matters that could be disposed of in 2 minutes if you would only form the habit of writing down what you want me to consider and sending it to me by mail.<sup>40</sup>

To this irritable letter, the response from his employer and good friend was that it was Dewey who did all the talking during their last meeting! Norwithstanding such arguments, when Dewey disclosed to the regents in 1892 that he was considering accepting an offer from William Rainey Harper of Chicago University,<sup>41</sup> regent Sexton begged him to remain in Albany:

For myself personally and as a Regent, I shall greatly regret your leaving us, if such shall be your decision. The cause of education in New York state can but suffer a great loss therein. Probably some one else will be raised up to carry on the work; but there can be but one "Dewey."<sup>42</sup>

#### University Extension and Traveling Libraries

During his seventeen years of public service at the state capitol, the indefatigable Melvil Dewey, with full support of the Board of

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<sup>39</sup>Frank Pierce Hill, "Melvil Dewey: a Personal View," American Library Association Bulletin 26 (February 1932): 94.

<sup>40</sup>Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 125.

<sup>41</sup>Copy of supporting document is in Appendix D.

<sup>42</sup>Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 125.

Regents, reformed the State Library and developed a library system and educational program so comprehensive and progressive that New York became a national model demonstrating an entirely new concept of what education of the people could and should mean.

Actually, Dewey's direct influence extended before his election as secretary of the Board of Regents and director of the State Library, and lasted long after his departure from Albany. As early as July 1888, impressed by Dewey's reputation as professor of library economy and director of the library of Columbia, the Board of Regents invited him to address the twenty-sixth Convocation of the University of the State of New York in the Senate Chamber. Dewey's speech, "Libraries as Related to the Educational Work of the State"<sup>43</sup> so impressed the participating administrators and educators that the next day the following resolutions were proposed by Harrison E. Webster, president of Union College. These resolutions were unanimously adopted by the Convocation:

Whereas, The Convocation believes that the time has come when certain of our public libraries should be recognized as an essential part of the state's system of higher education, and as properly a factor with the academies and colleges in the composition of the University of the State of New York; and

Whereas, To secure to the state the full advantages of such recognition, it is necessary that proper provision should be made by the state for advisory supervision and guidance of existing institutions and for stimulating the formation of new libraries; therefore

Resolved, That the Convocation request the Regents of the University to take such action as may seem to them expedient for giving to such libraries as their official inspection shall show to be worthy the distinction, their proper place as a part of our state system of higher education.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Libraries as Related to the Educational Work of the State," Library Notes 3 (June 1888), pp. 333-348.

<sup>44</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Libraries to be Officially Recognized as People's Universities," Library Notes 3 (June 1888): 249.

Thus when Dewey began his service as secretary of the Board of Regents in January, 1889, the stage had already been set for a new educational venture centered around public libraries in New York. At the first meeting of the year, the Regents unanimously approved the request of the University Convocation of 1888, thus the Chancellor and the Committee on Legislation were requested to procure any needed legislation to enable the new secretary to carry out his proposals. As a result, within six months, the Regents were given exclusive jurisdiction over the State Library, and the State Museum; state appropriations for the development of local libraries and museums were increased drastically.

Again at the 1889 University Convocation, Dewey spoke eloquently on "The Extension of the University of the State of New York" -- an innovative program of external studies for persons unable to attend college.<sup>45</sup> Such a proposal excited the Regents and participating educators so much that a series of eleven resolutions were passed by the Regents, and university extension was immediately recognized as one of their proper functions. Among the Regents, a standing committee on university extension was organized with Pliny T. Sexton as chairman; nationally, an American Society for the extension of the University Teaching was formed on December 23, 1890, with Edmund J. James as its president. In 1891, New York State appropriated \$10,000 for the University extension work. An explanation for this appropriation stated:

The action of the Legislature of the State of New York, in voting \$10,000 for the inauguration of University Extension in the State, is largely due to the enthusiastic efforts of Mr. Melvil

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<sup>45</sup> New York, University of the State of New York, Annual Report of the Regents, for the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 1890, pp. 73-115.

Dewey. By making use of the publications of the American Society, he succeeded in bringing this cause clearly before the members of the legislature, with the above result.<sup>46</sup>

Later Dewey outlined his plan for the development of university extension in the State of New York this way:

The \$10,000 voted by the Legislature for the work will be used in establishing a University Extension department of the University of the State. The function of this department will be to stimulate interest by printed matter, local addresses, correspondence and the maintenance of a central office at the Capitol. It is proposed to adopt the English custom of lending selected libraries for use during the course, and furnish illustrative material for the lectures; and, in general, to have the State do what it can do most cheaply, and furnish what individual towns could obtain only at considerable cost.<sup>47</sup>

Thus a department of University Extension was established in 1891 with Dewey as the director. Circulars, bulletins and other promotional materials were published, lectures and classes were organized, examinations were held by the University to evaluate the results of the regional centers. As the movement generated momentum, the new budget-minded governor, Roswell P. Flower, began to feel the pressure from the University and the claim from Dewey upon the state pocket-book. In his message to the legislature in 1892, the Governor tried to reduce the state's share of the operational expenditure by saying:

My fears that the State will eventually find the control and supervision of university extension an anormously expensive undertaking, wrong in principle because it taxes the majority for the benefit of the few, and indefensible as State policy except under the broadest view of public welfare, are based chiefly upon the testimony of those who have been most closely identified with the new movement. . . .<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> American Society for the Extension of University Teaching, Handbook of University Extension, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: American Society for the Extension of University Teaching, 1893), p. 30

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>48</sup> New York (State) Governors, Messages from the Governors v. 9, pp. 18-19.



After some pessimistic remarks, the Governor tactfully concluded:

Even the Regents of the University, in their extension bulletin, invite contributions to the movement, saying: 'While the feeling seems to have generally prevailed that the funds of the State, raised by taxation, should not be used for the expenses of local work, however beneficent -- and in that spirit the legislative appropriation in behalf of university extension was limited to general supervisory uses; still, the cause of public education could be greatly advanced if it were possible to supplement and aid the work with judicious appropriations of money in the poorer and sparsely populated localities.'

With such conditions prevailing, further recourse to State assistance would not be unnatural, and I submit the question to your practical judgment whether it is wise for the State to continue to bear this questionable, and in the future, perhaps, awkward responsibility.<sup>49</sup>

However, Dewey was one step ahead of the game. The State legislators had been sold on the idea of extension education, and the state statutes passed in 1891 also charged the University system "to provide for, promote, more widely extend to, and bring within the reach of the people at large, adult as well as youth, opportunities and facilities for education."<sup>50</sup> Since the entering wedge had already been inserted, the Regents' Standing Committee on University Extension was able to claim:

The misapprehensions . . . seem to have been caused largely by the name 'University Extension,' which has been generally used, and which the Regents have permitted themselves to use, in speaking of the law and the work which it contemplates, . . .

This name originated in England, where similar work of a more limited character is being done under the auspices of the English Universities. . . .

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-21.

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in the printed letter of Pliny T. Sexton to Governor Roswell P. Flower, March 24, 1892. Melvil Dewey Papers.

But still the main purpose of the Regents in executing the law of 1891 . . . will be to strive to so supplement our existing school system, with local organizations for educational extension work upon plans suited to the circumstances of those who cannot attend ordinary schools. . . .<sup>51</sup>

Thus the legislators and finally the governor were convinced to continue the annual appropriation. The university law passed the same year further contained the following provision relative to university extension:

The Regents may co-operate with other agencies in bringing within the reach of the people at large increased educational opportunities and facilities, by stimulating interest, recommending methods, designating suitable teachers and lecturers, lending necessary books and apparatus, conducting examinations, and granting credentials and otherwise aiding such work. No money appropriated by the State for this work shall be expended in paying for services or expenses of teachers or lectures.<sup>52</sup>

The same legislative session also approved an act to enlarge facilities for education by authorizing trusts for the establishment of libraries, museums, and other educational institutions. The act vested in the donor power to determine the object of the trust, and to prescribe regulations concerning the administration of it.<sup>53</sup>

With such legal provisions and state support, Dewey was able to plan in advance a comprehensive educational extension system and implement his ideas step by step. The department of university extension was expanded rapidly and later renamed Home Education, consisting of four divisions: Public Libraries, Study Clubs, Extension Teaching and Summer Schools, all under the directorship of Dewey.

Admittedly, the development of extension education in the State of New York was not an isolated incident in the history of education.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>New York (State) Governors, Messages from the Governors, v. 9, p. 21.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

The Chautauqua Institution, formed by John H. Vincent and Lewis Miller in the summer of 1874, was a forerunner of the popular educational movement that greatly aroused the attention and enthusiasm of educators and social reformers across the nation. For many years, Dewey served as a member of its general council together with Jane Addams of Hull House, G. Stanley Hall, president of Clark University, John H. Barrows, president of Oberlin College, and Bradford P. Raymond, president of Wesleyan University. In the summer of 1889, about the same time Dewey initiated the university extension in the University of the State of New York, a similar university extension scheme was also launched at the Chautauqua Institution, drawn up by a committee consisting of William Rainey Harper, principal of the Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts, John Vincent, chancellor of Chautauqua, and his son, George E. Vincent, director of the Chautauqua Press, Herbert B. Adams of Johns Hopkins and other professors of Eastern universities.<sup>54</sup> In the summer of 1901, a library school was established in Chautauqua with Dewey as the director; this school offered a continuing education program for librarians for many decades. For many years Dewey also served as an executive board member and trustee of the Chautauqua Institution.

When William R. Harper became president of the new University of Chicago in 1891, Dewey was offered, by his Chautauquan friend, total charge of the university library, the library school, and the university extension program

including not only university extension proper, correspondence schools, night colleges, but a complete examinations system . . .

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<sup>54</sup> Joseph E. Gould, The Chautauqua Movement (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1961), pp. 36-37.

and all other agencies for higher education outside the ordinary class room work of the old institutions.<sup>55</sup>

Somehow, the University of Chicago appointment did not materialize and Dewey remained in Albany. Under his dedicated efforts, the University of the State of New York became a renowned center of extension teaching for the state as well as for the whole nation. This aspect is especially mentioned in A History of American Education by Good and Teller:

In the United States, the movement toward extension teaching created great excitement. Melvil Dewey of the New York State Library, and Herbert B. Adams, history professor at Johns Hopkins, became leading promoters. An American Society for the Extension of University Teaching was formed (1890), and university credit for the courses was arranged. About 1890 and after, lectures were given for some years in a hundred centers, chiefly by professors from Eastern universities.<sup>56</sup>

The basic idea and primary activities of extension education were summed up by Dewey in his last annual report as secretary of the Board of Regents:

The functions of the University include not only the higher education given in the regular teaching institutions, but also that equally important home education for those out of schools and colleges who must give their working hours to other duties and have only evenings and bits of leisure to give to such education as can be thus secure at home. The best thinkers have to realize that it is a very imperfect and unsatisfactory system which provides instruction and guidance only for the limited school period of youth and does nothing for the equally important education that should extend through the rest of life. The chief agencies in this work are libraries, museums, study clubs and extension teaching.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>56</sup> Harry G. Good and James D. Teller, A History of American Education, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 484.

<sup>57</sup> New York University of the State of New York, Annual Report of the Secretary to the Board of Regents, for the Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 1900, pp. 20-21.

In a typical Dewey-esque style, the report continues:

So often the pioneer, New York was the first state or country to recognize this fully by statute and authorize the maintenance of a supervisory department, which has proved that the public and traveling library and study club can be made an effective, practical and indeed essential part of our educational system. We have already, scattered throughout the state, over 400 registered study clubs doing systematic continuous educational work for 10 or more weeks under supervision of the home education department. We have also nearly 1000 traveling libraries of the choicest books published and 24,500 wall and hand photographs and lantern slides selected from the best pictures, which are lent for a limited time to any community requesting it, and which, by common consent, are doing more for their cost than has ever before been ever approximated by any other system. There is no compliment or evidence of appreciation so conclusive as imitation. Official reports show that with three exceptions every other state of the Union has within a half dozen years adopted our system more or less fully, because of its economy and educational efficiency. . . .<sup>58</sup>

Undeniably, Dewey was the primary developer of traveling libraries and public libraries in New York, as witnessed by their growth and development during this period:

These traveling libraries are forerunners of local free public libraries which are being established in many new communities each year. Between 1893 and 1900 the number of independently organized libraries under state supervision has grown from 29 to 175, the books from 69,956 to 606,332, and the books read have increased from 192,899 to 2,182,154 , or more than tenfold. . . .

The public library is no longer a mere storehouse for the safe keeping of books; it is a fountain, not a cistern, and the National Educational Association and similar bodies now recognize it without a dissenting voice as an active educational institution which must be dealt with hereafter as a necessary ally of the public school in any satisfactory system of education. New York has been the leader in these vitally important new ideas, and has received at home and abroad most generous recognition. . . .<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, the success of university extension and traveling libraries had received recognition at home and abroad. So reported

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 22-23.

Governor Frank S. Black in 1898 on the achievements of the University of the State:

New York has in her university an organization nearly as old as the State itself. Its work has established its reputation at home and abroad. . . . The recent administration of the University knows the methods of reaching desired results. Under it, new currents are setting toward New York. Its field is broadening every year. The best educators believe that system is nearest perfect, whose instruction does not end with the period of youth, but continues through the student's life. The library is a chief agency in this continuance. New York, the pioneer in many fields, was the first in this or any country to recognize by statute the efficiency of the public library as a part of its educational plan. We have over five hundred traveling libraries of the best books published. . . . Local free public libraries are springing up under its lead. In the last four years the number of libraries has increased from 201 to 340, and the books from 404,616 to 1,038,618. . . . Our State Library is by far the largest and most efficient maintained by any state. It is the center of a great work, the strongest ally of the public schools, and its influence develops constantly. New York has been the teacher in these vital, new ideas and has received, the world over, most generous recognition. . . .<sup>60</sup>

Unfortunately, the basic problem of a divided state educational superintendence was still unsettled. The political movement to unify the Department of Public Instruction and the University of the State of New York once again became a major issue in Albany. Melvil Dewey was appointed along with six other persons by Governor Theodore Roosevelt to form a commission on educational unification. In 1899, the struggle for political power finally led to Dewey's resignation as the secretary of the Regents so that the two rivaling educational departments might be unified. [See Appendixes I and J.] His successor, James Parsons, compiled and published the complete minutes of the Board during the secretaryship of Dewey to reveal the man's contributions. This is what appears on the verso of the title page:

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<sup>60</sup> New York (State) Governors, Messages from the Governors, v. 10, pp. 828-829.

This volume contains the official minutes of the Regents of the University during the secretaryship of Melvil Dewey, a period of 11 years (1889-99) in which the University came to be recognized as one of the most effective educational organizations in the United States.<sup>61</sup>

Resigning as secretary of the Regents in 1899, Dewey still kept his other positions in the University till 1905. Through his functions as director of State Library and director of New York State Library School, Dewey's patterns of university extension and traveling libraries not only influenced the rural population of New York but also that of Midwestern states and farther. His colleagues and students moved westward and brought his ideas to the new frontier and bridged the cultural, educational gap between the more advanced Empire State and that of the incredibly isolated new communities of the Midwest and Western states.

According to Laurel A. Grotzinger in her biography of Katharine Sharp (an outstanding graduate of the New York State Library School who later established the library schools at Illinois Armour Institute, Chicago, and at the University of Illinois, Urbana), the plan of a traveling library also traveled with Dewey's students:

During the same year [1899], the current fervor over traveling libraries swept through the Library School. Another library innovation which received much of its impetus from Melvil Dewey . . . Michigan adopted the New York plan and was followed by Ohio, Iowa and other midwestern states. Especially active was the spontaneous development in Wisconsin.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>University of the State of New York, Official Minutes of the University during the Secretaryship of Melvil Dewey . . ., p. ii.

<sup>62</sup>Grotzinger, The Power and the Dignity: Librarianship and Katharine Sharp, p. 119.

During the summers of 1895 and 1896, while serving as the director of library and the library school at Illinois Armour Institute, Katharine Sharp directed the extension library program at the University of Wisconsin, financed by Senator James R. Stout. The success of the summer extension program led to the establishment of a regular library school at the University of Wisconsin.<sup>63</sup> The library development in Wisconsin was also influenced by Dewey through two other persons. Frank Avery Hutchins and Lutie Stearns, both impressed by the work done in New York, urged Senator Stout to introduce a bill in the state legislature for library development. After some difficulties the measure was passed with a very modest appropriation in 1895. Frank Hutchins was appointed chairman of the Wisconsin Free Library Commission and Lutie Stearns was put in charge of the Traveling Library Department. During Hutchins' nine-year tenure, free libraries in Wisconsin were increased from twenty-eight to 126; the traveling library from zero to 350, including 186 circulated by the Commission.

The record for library training was equally impressive. In 1895 only one library in Wisconsin employed personnel with formal training. By 1904, twenty libraries had school-trained library staff and 89 librarians had attended summer programs conducted by the Commission.<sup>64</sup>

In 1897, upon the recommendation of Dewey, Andrew Draper, then president of the University of Illinois, hired Katharine Sharp as the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>64</sup> John D. Marshall, ed., An American Library History Reader (Hamden, Conn.: Shoe String Press, 1961), pp. 206-208.



head librarian for the University and established a school of librarianship.<sup>65</sup> Many class projects, such as "the children's library," "the pedagogical library" and reading lists for schools, were organized by the students. Because of the extension lectures of Lutie Stearns from Wisconsin, the library students were so inspired that three traveling libraries were formed in 1899 to serve the surrounding communities in Illinois.<sup>66</sup>

In 1904 Draper was called back from Illinois to be the Commissioner of Education of New York State. Apparently impressed by the library development during his absence of twelve years, Draper, in his annual report, observed:

The legislation of 1892 concerning libraries was truly revolutionary. It was not expected that the school libraries would be increased much in size because for the first time they were really made school libraries, adapted to, and limited to the uses of the schools. It was expected that they would multiply in number and certainly that they would become of real use to the schools. They have multiplied until they are established in 86% of all the school districts of the State.<sup>67</sup>

Draper went on to comment:

The vicissitudes of the school library movement in New York may be somewhat seen in the following interesting table:

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<sup>65</sup> Grotzinger, The Power and the Dignity: Librarianship and Katharine Sharp, pp. 80-81.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 119-121.

<sup>67</sup> New York (State), Department of Education, The Third Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1906, p. 621.

TABLE 1

## DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Fiscal Year	New York State appropriation	Combined State and local Library expenditures	Total number of volumes in school districts
1839	\$55,000	\$110,000	. . . . .
1843	55,000	110,000	875,000
1848	55,000	84,315	1,338,848
1852	55,000	90,579	1,570,131
1856	55,000	55,216	1,494,542
1860	55,000	34,035	1,286,536
1865	55,000	26,816	1,269,123
1870	55,000	30,951	986,691
1875	55,000	33,225	809,147
1880	50,000	30,398	735,651
1885	50,000	41,369	722,873
1889	50,000	49,742	785,560
1890	50,000	48,890	787,970
1891	50,000	52,159	829,150
1892	50,000	61,820	825,910
1893	50,000	94,351	814,150
1894	50,000	118,181	799,890
1895	50,000	132,939	959,080
1896	50,000	136,270	998,896
1897	50,000	162,706	1,112,233
1898	50,000	164,969	1,337,107
1899	50,000	141,699	1,544,170
1900	50,000	142,158	1,560,858
1901	50,000	140,883	1,665,826
1902	50,000	192,211	1,716,128
1903	50,000	158,295	1,717,954
1904	50,000	258,547	2,009,820
1905	. . .	226,938	2,170,207
1906	. . .	251,936	2,499,328

Source: Adapted from New York State, Department of Education, The Third Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1906, pp. 621-622. In this abridged table, years are cited at intervals from 1839 to 1889. During the first fifteen years, both library expenditures and number of volumes did increase annually, later on both figures declined until the year 1889 when Melvil Dewey became director of the State Library, both figures went up significantly, indicating the changes of local interest and improvement of library management. See also pages 135-136 for laws relating to library development.

Actually, this "interesting table" not only reveals "the vicissitudes of the school library movement in New York," it also verifies the influence of the traveling libraries. Dewey explained the story behind its development as follows:

Beginning with 1837, New York spent \$55,000 a year in establishing public libraries in the 11,000 school districts of state. More than twenty other states followed the example, and all had the same experience. The novelty wore off, the books were less used, and in most cases became scattered, so that instead of a steady increase, after the first fifteen years there has been steady diminution in the number of volumes. For a library is like a reservoir of drinking water. It must have a constant fresh stream running in, or it becomes stagnant and unusable. This freshness is not dependent on the date of a book's publication, but on the time when it is first seen by that community. This is the great secret of the traveling library. Fifty or one hundred books go to a community and, being a new broom, sweep clean. There is a zeal in looking them over and seeing what is available that stimulates interest and makes readers. After three or six months this wears off, but is renewed when this library is moved on to the next station and another takes its place. Thus interest is kept alive at every point, and books which used to become mere lumber after a few readings are now promptly worn out in actual service, so that we are getting better returns for each dollar than by any other method.<sup>68</sup>

So it was Melvil Dewey who, through his promotion of the traveling libraries, generated public interest and state wide support, revived the declining school libraries and provided poor, remote, rural school districts with fresh reading materials. Through the traveling libraries and the extension teaching, correspondence courses, lecture-study clubs and reading circles, a fresh new world was opened up to the isolated communities and their culturally deprived children.

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<sup>68</sup> National Educational Association, Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Fortieth Annual Meeting, July 8-12, 1901 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1901), p. 862.

Knowing the educational value of the traveling libraries, Andrew Draper thus followed the pattern established by Dewey in developing library services in New York. A year after Melvil Dewey left the position of director of State Library, Draper exemplified the prevailing conditions as follows:

The purpose of the New York State traveling libraries is to put good reading into the hands of as many residents of the state as possible who are out of touch with a free library already established. To communities without a public library, small model libraries of 50 or 100 books are lent. They are provided with book-cases, catalogues and the necessary charging apparatus. It is hoped incidentally that these will lead to the establishment of local free libraries when the habit of reading good books has been established. . . .

. . . In agricultural localities, where the securing of taxpayers' signatures seems a hardship, libraries may be lent to granges, or to churches, often the only natural distributing point of a rural community. Business corporations may also borrow books for their employees. State institutions use traveling libraries for circulation among inmates and staff.

Although the State pays transportation charges both ways, the cost of this is met by the borrowers who pay a uniform fee of \$2 for 25 volumes and \$1 for each additional 25 volumes. By this plan the books are equally accessible to all, the most distant villagers securing a library for the same expenditure as those situated only a few miles from Albany.

The time limit for retaining a traveling library is six months, but in order to encourage study and supplementary reading, this time is extended for clubs and schools to cover the academic year. . . .

A still more flexible form of traveling library is the house library, which is sent for three months to any resident of New York on payment of the fee of \$1 to cover transportation charges. This plan was originally adopted for the benefit of the remote farmhouse. It has thus far been most used by students, . . .

The offer of the State to supply books for the people in these various ways has met a cordial response. The number actually used in the traveling library service, beginning with 3429 sent to 44 places in 1893, reached 34,528 sent to 660 places in 1906.<sup>69</sup>

Understandably, all these fascinating developments and extensions in and around libraries were made possible only because there emerged

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<sup>69</sup> New York (State), Department of Education, The Third Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, pp. 638-639.

in Albany a well established State Library and an army of aggressive, highly motivated library students trained and commanded by Melvil Dewey. While the growth of the New York State Library School and the general development of its alumni were described in Chapter II, the history and development of the State Library during these seventeen years has yet to be told.

Incidentally when the subject was brought up among librarians regarding "to what extent should a state library lend its books to the citizens of the state at large," Dewey's answer was that "the state library has in the immediate future a much larger field. It is to be the library, not of the capital, but of the entire state; not of the office-holders or lawyers alone, but of every citizen."<sup>70</sup> Notwithstanding the disagreement among his colleagues and opposition from the state officials, Dewey went ahead, as usual, and created the popular demand and materialized his prophecies.

#### The State Library and the "People's University"

Just as he turned a small sleepy, neglected library at Columbia College into a respectable, active, useful center of study and research, Dewey expanded and vitalized the New York State Library and redefined the concept and functions of a state library. Before Dewey took over as director, the State Library consisted of only forty thousand law books and less than a hundred thousand ordinary books for the use of courts and departments of the state.

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<sup>70</sup>Melvil Dewey, "To What Extent Should a State Library Lend Its Books to the Citizens of the State at Large," Public Libraries 6 (January 1901): 34.

When Dewey left in 1905, the State Library became a complex, effective, multipurpose organization carrying out the following functions and services: first, inspection of public, school, and traveling libraries across the whole state; second, distribution of state grants to libraries; third, organization of new libraries and new services; fourth, loans of books from the state library to school and traveling libraries; fifth, aiding other libraries in reference work, in library management and administration, book selection and acquisition; sixth, training of librarians.<sup>71</sup>

Besides performing these functions effectively, the State Library actually consisted of the following libraries and individual units:

The Legislative Library.--The goal of this branch was to develop resources specially needed in state legislation and administration, and to organize these resources so as to be most readily available in solving legislative and administrative problems. This library was established in 1889, the year Dewey became director of the State Library; by 1904, there were nearly 100,000 volumes on those subjects plus other materials related to governments and laws of other states. Annotated reference lists on current topics of legislation were made and mailed to institutions and legislators of the state; as a result of these services, Dewey received wonderful support and appreciation from all legislators and heads of institutions across the state. A letter from president Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia testified:

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<sup>71</sup>New York (State), Education Department, The Third Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, p. 641.

. . . I want also to congratulate you upon your system of notifying heads of institutions regarding legislation. Our trustees appreciate this very highly, as, you may be sure, I myself do.<sup>72</sup>

This library also provided educational services to states outside of New York, as the following passage demonstrates:

From every other state advance copies of laws and reports are received to be summarized and indexed. In return the yearbook of legislation is sent to each of them and is accepted as the authoritative manual on comparative state legislation by all schools and students of political science. This records a brief summary of the laws on every subject passed in any state of the Union, giving substance in fewest words with date of the law, all followed by an exhaustive subject index. A group of recognized authorities in the different main subjects give their services each year in preparing from the records kept by the legislative librarian an review of the trend of legislation in their specialties. The third annual is the digest of governors' messages. In this every current topic touched on by any American governor is briefly summarized, or if practicable, quoted in his own words, and closely classified and indexed. Thus the legislator or student for any subject can avail himself of a summary of all laws passed, changes in constitution, a summing up by a recognized authority and also all comments in the same field by governors.<sup>73</sup>

The Legislative Library managed by Dewey was so successful that "other states are adopting the plan started here 15 years ago of making practical assistance in improving current legislation a chief function of the state library."<sup>74</sup>

Education Library.--The goal of this branch was to develop resources "for the use of school officers and the more than 30,000 teachers of the state." And in 1904, the year before Dewey left Albany, he was able to report on the achievement of this goal:

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<sup>72</sup>Nicholas Murray Butler to Melvil Dewey, March 5, 1891, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>73</sup>New York (State), Education Department, The First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, pp. 652-653.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 652.

There are now 8542 volumes, 84,247 pamphlets, and 5260 subject cards on education catalogued. Nearly one fourth of all the pamphlets in the library and half of all the sequents currently received are in education. Brief lists of the best books and articles are sent on request and an index of subjects with addresses of those wishing later material is kept, and references or material is sent them from time to time. This service for the entire state involves much labor, but it is of the highest importance that not only public school and other educational officers and teachers, but every citizen specially interested in education, should be able to get the latest and best results available in print.<sup>75</sup>

Naturally, this Library worked closely with all the traveling libraries in acquisition and selection of books for school libraries across the state.

Medical Library.--This library was organized in 1891 under the directorship of Dewey to serve all citizens, particularly registered physicians and medical workers of the state. It also served as a reference center for hospitals and medical schools. According to the annual report of 1904:

There are 14,199 volumes instead of the 2740 with which the medical library was started in 1891. There are 9097 medical subject cards. There are 7250 pamphlets and 317 serials are received regularly. A council of five of the leading physicians give their time without compensation at monthly meetings to aid in selecting books and improving the library.<sup>76</sup>

History and Genealogy Library.--The same annual report stated:

The library is justly famed for the wealth of its material not only for New York, but also for general and local history throughout the country. It is one of the strongest American libraries in genealogy and strives to meet the large demands in this field so greatly stimulated by the recent development of the various revolutionary and similar societies in which membership is dependent on descent.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 653.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 654.



It is worth noting that in the field of history, the idea of documentary research and scientific history, so popularized by German historian Von Ranke, became fully supported by American scholars at this time. Herbert B. Adams, professor of history at Johns Hopkins and close ally of Dewey in their promotion of university extensions, represented the generation of historians who relied heavily on library research.

In 1875 he said:

The most important factor in the constitution of an historical department is the proper adjustment of relations with the college or university library. . . . The promotion of historical study in any college of university is absolutely dependent upon the use of books.<sup>78</sup>

While Herbert Adams complained about the poor collections and organization of materials in most American colleges, he praised the new library at Columbia administered by Melvil Dewey who managed to

. . . organize so thoroughly its literary resources in any given field like history or political science that they can be speedily massed upon a given point with the precision and certainty of a Prussian army corps in the execution of a military manoeuvre.<sup>79</sup>

So it was not surprising to find the history collection at the State Library to be "one of the strongest American libraries" in local and regional historical collection.

Library for the Blind.--This was first established by Dewey on March 19, 1896, and thus made the State of New York foremost in the library service for the blind. The state legislature annually appro-

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<sup>78</sup> U.S. Bureau of Education, The Study of History in American Colleges and Universities, by Herbert Baxter Adams, Circular of Information no. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), p. 43.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

priated \$1000 for printing new literature for the blind. In 1904 Dewey commented on library holdings

Those copies which are not needed in the State library for the blind are sold to individuals and other institutions, the proceeds being used to further increase the efficiency of the library. . . . In addition to these books now for the first time available in raised print, about 125 volumes in Moon type and in New York point were recently purchased by the library. There have also been many gifts from the Xavier free publication society.<sup>80</sup>

Besides, in 1904 Congress had passed an act to enable libraries and institutions to send books, pamphlets, and other reading matters in raised characters for the use of the blind free by U. S. mail both ways; as a result, loans to the blind were increased to 2731 books that fiscal year.<sup>81</sup>

Loans and Reference Services.--In 1889, when Dewey initiated the interlibrary loan service to lend books to schools and scholars, 625 such loans were made. In 1903, the total loans were increased to 106,963, a growth of 170-fold in 15 years.<sup>82</sup> This service was the backbone of Dewey's home education program and many schools and scholars were benefited by this innovative work.

Another innovative work of the library was performed by its reference department, which is mentioned in the following:

As this library is for the whole state, available not only to those who call in person, but also for inquiries by mail and telephone, this must be a faculty library. There has been for many

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<sup>80</sup> Melvil Dewey, "Reading Matter for the Blind," Public Libraries 9 (July 1904): 329.

<sup>81</sup> New York (State), Education Department, The First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, pp. 654 and 658.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 658.

years a law librarian and there are now, besides the general reference librarian with two or three assistants, special librarians for sociology, medicine, history and genealogy, education and archives.<sup>83</sup>

Actually Dewey initiated reference service for library users first at Columbia College when such service was considered rare and peripheral by American college libraries. As early as 1884, in his Circular of Information concerning services offered by the library of Columbia College, Dewey introduced such "Aids to Readers" in the Contents:

More than careful cataloguing [is] necessary. Utilizing the labor of others. Best reference books. Discriminating counsel. Spirit of accuracy. Critical method. Secondary sources of information. Reference librarians to help students investigate. Collection of material for individual use. Training of students. Development of skill in research. Co-operation of faculty.<sup>84</sup>

In his library schools at Columbia and in Albany, Dewey included these topics in the syllabus so that students were trained to perform reference services. At the turn of the century, as teaching and studying emerged from exclusive use of textbooks to the utilization of collateral materials, and research methods were stressed by many institutions,

. . . Dewey's example was followed by some other institutions, but the majority of college and university libraries were slow to accord reference the same standing as technical service function. Even large universities were hesitant about assigning staff specifically to reference functions.<sup>85</sup>

Today, however, no librarian or college professor would consider Dewey's innovation of "aids to readers" illegitimate or peripheral.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 657.

<sup>84</sup> Melvil Dewey, Columbia College Library, School of Library Economy, Circular of Information, 1884, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Fritz Veit, "Library Service to College Students," Library Trends 25 (July 1976): 369.

Publications.--Since Dewey believed that

. . . The library is not for Albany nor the Capitol, but for the whole state and for all the people. It must use print freely as the only practical means of reaching people with many of the important results of work in the central library.<sup>86</sup>

Many publications were issued by the State Library since 1889, some were sent free to institutions and extension centers, some were sold at a nominal price to clubs or libraries outside the state. In 1904 the annual report contained the following:

Fifteen years ago the innovation of charging for state publications was introduced, and it was claimed that no one would buy them. . . . Thousands of dollars have been received and turned into the treasury under this system, thus showing that these publications render a service real enough to justify people in buying them.<sup>87</sup>

Some series of publications were turned out regularly by the State Library for public use: bulletins, bibliographies, history, legislation, indexes, best book lists and publications for the Library School. Their use was explained in the annual report:

Many of these are widely used in other states as textbooks for library schools or as guides to home study or as useful tools in libraries, large and small. . . . For example, the index of 318 pages to the state scientific publications covers hundreds of volumes and pamphlets issued from 1837 to 1902. Ninety-five syllabuses on various subjects of general interest as guides for clubs and students and for lecture courses have been printed.<sup>88</sup>

Other units of the State Library included the Catalog Department, the Acquisition Department, the Shelf Department and other technical services. Naturally, the Library School students received their training and practical experience in the Library and gave their services free as

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<sup>86</sup>New York (State), Education Department, The First Annual Report of the Commissioner of Education, p. 659.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

part of their study program. With such an effective, mutually beneficial and self-sufficient arrangement, the library was able to expand rapidly and provided many services at a very low budget. It was stated that in 1876, the Library possessed 95,000 volumes, in 1889, the year Dewey became director, its holding was only 138,000 volumes, in 1905 when Dewey left, the figure reached 400,000 volumes.<sup>89</sup>

But the remarkable increase of the book collection was only one of the measurable successes of the State Library. The services it provided, the patterns established for other libraries, and the educational influence it extended to other states were more important than the building of the collection. In 1906, a year after he left Albany to devote full-time to the development of the Lake Placid Club, Dewey spoke with apparent self-satisfaction and pride about the "broadening of state libraries":

We all know that a few years ago most of the state libraries were wretchedly inefficient if measured by present standards, but there is steady broadening and awakening. They are getting out of politics; stronger men and women are being chosen to conduct them; and chiefly, both the library and the public are recognizing the larger scope and functions of which the older generation never dreamed. . . .

The Washington state library has just issued a circular saying that under the new law it has evolved from a mere collection of books into an active business and educational agency. It announces three distinct divisions:

The central or state library proper, . . .

The second division, of public documents, . . . is the book business branch of the state. . . .

Most interesting is the third division, the educational branch, in two sections: public and traveling libraries . . .

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<sup>89</sup>Walter Stanley Biscoe, "As It Was in the Beginning," Public Libraries 30 (February 1925): 76.

California under its new law is moving rapidly in the same direction, with the best promise. I heard recently from a half dozen other states similar word, and the movement is bound to be general. . . .<sup>90</sup>

Evidently, New York State Library was the forerunner of this general movement--the movement to make the library the popular educational agency of the people. At this point, it is interesting to note that Horace Mann, secretary of state board of education of Massachusetts and promoter of the common school movement, had once said: "Had I the power, I would scatter libraries over the whole land, as the sower sows his wheat-field."<sup>91</sup> As the secretary of the Regents of New York State University, Melvil Dewey, to an admirable extent, actualized the wish of Horace Mann. In retrospect, Dewey also fulfilled the expectations of his old friend Henry Barnard, who told him before he left Columbia College and went to Albany:

. . . in a few years the academic and college libraries will get rid of their dead matter and deader routine and limited work. . . ; in all the great district, village and city schools,-- town and city public libraries will be instituted. Then the old district libraries will receive a new development, and along with these movements the University aim of the Board will come out and be felt on the college and higher institutions. Therefore you will live to see in some form a registration of graduates tested by some recognized standard of examination applied by each college in connection with advisory and cooperating agencies of the Regents. . . .<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Broadening of State Libraries," Public Libraries 11 (January 1906): 12.

<sup>91</sup>Quoted in Paul Bixler, "Horace Mann--Mustard Seed," American Scholar 7 (1938-39): 32.

<sup>92</sup>Henry Barnard to Melvil Dewey, November 6, 1888, Melvil Dewey Papers.

Thus at the age of 77, two years before he died, Barnard entrusted his ambitions and dreams to Dewey, and he gave him the blessing for the mission:

Well, go on, . . . and develop the library into the great factor of universal and university education. I shall not live to see the results, but if you go to Albany within a year, and I live one year longer I am quite sure I shall see the beginnings of a great movement, which will go on with accelerating rapidity, and ever widening influence. Adieu.<sup>93</sup>

And indeed, Dewey accomplished the mission, to an even greater extent.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER VI

### LAKE PLACID CLUB AND LAKE PLACID EDUCATION FOUNDATION

In Dewey's eagerness to consolidate, to reorganize, and to get things done, it sometimes seemed as though he went out of his way to develop frictions and enemies where none had existed before. Furthermore, as a person occupying a patronage position, his uncompromised, continuous struggles to keep the office out of politics and his peculiar position in the controversial issue of unification of the educational systems led him into conflicts with the legislature, state officials and the press. At various times he was allegedly charged for juggling state appropriations around to provide funds for pet reforms and unauthorized projects.<sup>1</sup> Even though one joint subcommittee of the State Senate and Assembly concluded that:

no other result could be reached by the committee than that the charges were not only not sustained, but that by the means and spirit in which they were brought and persistently prosecuted, they were vexatious, frivolous and detrimental to public interests.<sup>2</sup>

Dewey's personality and reform ideas, unfortunately, kept him in constant conflicts with his peers and made him a controversial figure in the newspapers of his time. His insistence on spelling his name "Dui" officially, for example, was an issue between him and state offi-

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<sup>1</sup>Copies of supporting documents are in Appendixes A, I and J.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Cecil R. Roseberry, For the Government and People of This State: A History of the New York State Library, State Education Department (Albany: New York State Library, 1970), p. 61.



cials, bankers, and newspaper reporters for a while. When something seemed right or logically sound, Dewey would go ahead and do it, and would try persistently to make the others follow his self-righteous action--no matter how unpopular, impractical, or tactless it might be. Thus, in the long run, his friends and associates became less supportive and his superior, Andrew Draper, the first Commissioner of Education of New York State also announced

. . . that he had 'differed much in years gone by' with Dewey and that he was 'tentatively opposed to many of the projects' being undertaken by him. He objected further to Dewey's 'unfortunate predisposition . . . to set up something different only because it is different.'<sup>3</sup>

And then as a fatal blow to Dewey's public service there was the charge of anti-Semitism involving his private venture, the Lake Placid Club, and a petition by the Jewish citizens of New York demanding the removal of Dewey from his government position. Even though the committee investigating the matter reported earlier in 1905 that Lake Placid Club was a private club which had a right to make its own rules of admission and that Dewey was not a member of the council which established the rules, the Regents, under increasing political pressure, denounced unanimously that: "The further control of a private business which continues to be conducted on such lines is incompatible with the legitimate requirements of his position."<sup>4</sup> Obviously such denunciation forced Dewey to make a choice between his government positions and his Lake Placid Club. With the combination of other unfavorable conditions

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<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Dictionary of American Library Biography, 1978 ed., a.v. "Melvil Dewey," by Sarah K. Vann.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Rider, Melvil Dewey, p. 106.

developed in the Department of Education subsequent to the Unification Act, Dewey realized that his political influence was limited. For six months he agonized over the situation, finally, on September 21, 1905, at the age of fifty-four, Dewey resigned as State Librarian and Director of the Library School.

#### Lake Placid Club

For Dewey, the decision to leave Albany for Lake Placid was not just a retreat from active public service and an escape from hay fever, which he and his wife suffered increasingly each summer; he had other plans in mind. Years later, when his plans were fully materialized, he recalled:

During the summer vacations, my wife and I used to travel in search of a place where we could be free from hay fever and rose cold. But that wasn't the only purpose we had in common. We wanted to devote our lives to the cause of education; and one way of doing this was to help educators. If we could give them an opportunity to find health, strength, and inspiration, at moderate cost, we know we could be helping them.<sup>5</sup>

The Deweys visited the scenic Mirror Lake in the Adirondack mountains in upstate New York first in 1890, then purchased ten acres of land in 1893 and began preparations for a cooperative vacation club for educational workers with moderate means. The Club opened in 1895 in a section called "Morningside" with primitive facilities. Among the original group of members and cooperative owners were clergymen-publishers William B. Howland, Lyman Abbott, and Hamilton W. Mabie;

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<sup>5</sup>Allison Gray, "That Darned Literary Fellow Across the Lake," American Magazine 103 (April 1927): 130.

educators-authors Nicholas Murray Butler, James R. Day, James Lawrence Laughlin, Ira A. Place, Jeremiah W. Jenks, Lucy M. Salmon and others. Melvil and Annie Dewey, of course, were the planners-organizers of this "place of recreation for mem's bodies and souls." With the Deweys and a group of educators and clergymen, naturally one would find such standards for the Club like: "plenty of the best food," "plenty of undisturbed sleep," "every variety of wholesome fisical recreation in all 4 seasons," and "intellectual and aesthetic stimulus," and regulations such as "no smoking," "no lotteries . . . or other gambling," and "prohibition law strictly enforst," and so on.<sup>6</sup> Of course, simpler spelling, the metric system and other reforms, so dear to Dewey's heart, were applied officially in the Club. With such unique and sometimes grotesque characteristics, it was little wonder that inn keepers across the lake laughed outright and prophesized wisely: "He believes he can run a summer resort, with no bar, no cigar stand, no gambling, and no late hours. He'll go broke before he's a year older!"<sup>7</sup> But then the Club was not just an ordinary summer resort, and Melvil Dewey was not just an ordinary inn keeper:

Within three years after its small beginning, the club management began to receive applications from many people of means, whose natural inclinations made them appreciative of the very things which Mr. Dewey stressed. Emerson has said that if a man build a better mouse-trap than his neighbors, the world will make a pathway to his door. And so the world of nature lovers and

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<sup>6</sup>Lake Placid Club, Club Standards (Lake Placid, N.Y.: Lake Placid Club, 1924), pp. 2-4. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Gray, "That Darned Liberary Fellow," p. 56.

simplicity seekers began to hew the pathway to Lake Placid Club, a pathway that has become a broad, smooth highway.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, without paying for a single line of advertisement, Lake Placid Club's strange regulations and restrictions for membership and admission attracted literally thousands of educated, middle-class people with their families "from 46 states and 26 nations."

In 1927, before the Club and its subsidiaries reached the peak of growth and another club was created in Florida, it was reported by a visitor that at Lake Placid

. . . there are 1,500 guests in midsummer and 1,200 in winter; and the property consists of over 9,900 acres, 390 buildings, and 43 farms. There are eight clubhouses and 100 guest cottages; a 60 acre poultry farm; about 500 head of registered cattle; model creameries and certified milk plants; steam-heating and electric-light plants; fire protection equipment that cost \$100,000; independent pure water supply; a theatre seating 1,200; a beautiful memorial chapel; dining-rooms seating 1,800; a general store that carries a \$100,000 stock; a 10,000 volume library; a \$30,000 organ; a symphony orchestra, and a separate dance sextet; lectures, plays, and motion pictures.

There are nearly forty courts for tennis, lawn bowls, croquet, and other outdoor games; five golf courses; one hundred and sixty boats; sixty saddle and sleigh horses; motor livery, garages, and repair shops.

The club is the center for winter sports in America. Only a few years ago, that section was snow-bound almost six months each winter. Now there are times when the New York Central runs special trains, in several sections, to carry incoming and outgoing crowds.<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly, when Dewey first saw the potential and decided to open the Club during the winter for outdoor sports, many people predicted financial disaster. At that time, a winter sports center was unheard of in the United States. As his son Godfrey reminisced half-a-

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<sup>8</sup>"Lake Placid Club -- One Man's Dream," The Wardman Park Vista (1927?): 24. Magazine clipping, Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>9</sup>Gray, "That Darned Literary Fellow," p. 56.

century later, when winter sports became popular and Lake Placid was just one of the many ski resorts in North America, Dewey's pioneering efforts were of historical significance in this country:

The most significant step in the history of the Club was the decision to open for winter, commencing in its 10th year, 1904-05. Since then, the Club has been open the year round. . . . It was the first winter sports center in the United States, and for many years, the foremost.<sup>10</sup>

Thus Godfrey Dewey recalled:

The first skis, which we brought into Lake Placid that first winter, were a curiosity. They were delivered with a single long pole and toe straps, and no one here, including myself, knew enough to know that they should have been equipped with harnesses. . . .

Winter opening was an immediate and assured success. Forest Towers was built for the next winter, 1905-06, and immediately outgrown, so that the main body of Forest Hall was built the year following, as the first complete year-round clubhouse. Improved facilities for all winter sports followed in rapid succession. In 10 years the Club was fully established as the leading winter sports center of the United States. In 15 years more, Lake Placid bid successfully for the III Olympic Winter Games, to be held in 1932, chiefly on the basis of the Club's 25 years of successful experience with all phases of winter sports.<sup>11</sup>

Godfrey Dewey was the president of the Organizing Committee for the III Olympic Winter Games, which took him years to make it successful. When Godfrey died in 1977 at the age of ninety in Lake Placid, he again saw the successful bidding of another Olympic Winter Games by Lake Placid -- scheduled for 1980. Except for a brief period in which he served as president of Emerson College, Godfrey spent most of his life in the Club, carrying on his father's various educational programs. He served as vice-president of the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation

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<sup>10</sup> Godfrey Dewey, "Sixty Years of Lake Placid Club, 1895-1955," Reprint of a talk given at Lake Placid Club, N.Y., 4 August 1955, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

and secretary of the Simpler Spelling Association, president of Forest Press, publisher of the Dewey Decimal Classification, and chairman of the Board of Trustees of Northwood School at Lake Placid.

Godfrey, earning his Ed.D. from Harvard and, as an authority on spelling and shorthand himself, remembered that

The first group of Club members came predominantly from educational circles -- college professors, teachers, preachers, writers, librarians, etc. -- so much so that it was sometimes referred to as a university club in the wilderness. Its unique standards, however, quickly attracted many families of culture and refinement whose ample means made moderate cost a secondary consideration, and whose demands for more and better facilities led naturally to a spiral of higher costs, till only thru the Foundation Restoration Plan . . . could most members of the original educational group afford to come.<sup>12</sup>

Melvil Dewey also explained repeatedly about the Club:

Some people seem to think it is a playground for the rich. We do have a great many wealthy people among our members and guests. Their money has helped to build up this enormous institution. But people cannot buy their way into the club. They must be the kind of people who belong in this atmosphere.

Our original plan never has been altered. . . .

The entire net earnings of the club must be used for educating carefully chosen boys and girls, and for needed vacations, at less than cost, to teachers, clergymen, librarians, and other social workers. In the real sense of the word, these people are the 'educators' of the nation. The club was organized to serve them; and by means of this permanent endowment fund they will continue to be served.

No matter what a guest pays -- whether it is twenty dollars a day or not a penny -- every advantage of the club is open to him. He eats the same quality of food, has the same recreations, enjoys the same music, lectures, and other forms of entertainment. The other guests do not know, unless he tells them, how much he is paying, or whether he is paying anything at all.<sup>13</sup>

Apparently, behind this phenomenal development and the growth of Dewey's business operation, there was the very intrinsic motive to

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Gray, "That Darned Literary Fellow," p. 130.

organize an educational, cultural enterprise for the benefit and enjoyment of "educators of the nation." As the foundation of the Club became fully established, the plan of an educational enterprise emerged and finally took over the management of the entire Lake Placid Company. Chartered as "the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation," this unusual institution came to represent Dewey's educational ideas uniquely.

#### Lake Placid Education Foundation

The origins and purposes of this educational foundation were made clear by Dewey on December 17, 1921. Due to its historical significance and its unique features, Dewey's own words are justified here:

On my 70th birthday Dec 10 ther was handed to me legali endorst, redi for transfer to the Foundation trustees as soon as elektet, everi share of the voting stok of the Lake Placid Club. This comon stok is \$100,000 & owns the surplus of \$320,000, thus starting the Foundation with \$420,000. In addition my wyf & I ar leaving over \$300,000 mor to the Foundation. Katharine L Sharp, our vice-president, left \$20,000 which the trustees wil administer as a memorial to her father; & May Seymour, for 34 years my co-worker left about \$40,000 last June, subjekt to a lyf interest of her relativs. We are sure from ofers alredi made that gifts & Legacies wil cum from other Club members. . . .<sup>14</sup>

After some discussion of the management of the Club and the Foundation, Dewey went on to state his purposes:

This stok has now been givn to the Foundation, its ernings to be used for 3 things, restoration, milionth man quest & seedsowing. Restoration. The most wasteful thing in education is scrapping best workers when they break down from overstrain. When a rejiment went stale Pershing didn't send it home, recruit another sent from training camps clear acros the sea, but with 1/10 the tym, labor & expense, he sent the rejiment bak of the lyns to play for a fu weeks & then brot them to the fyring lyn as seasond troops worth twys as

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<sup>14</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Lake Placid Club Education Foundation," December 17, 1921. Melvil Dewey Papers.

much becauz of experience. The colosal mistake in education has been our failure to do the same with thoz whose zeal has led them to cripl themselvs by overwork. We propoz without sacrificys of self-respekt or having the feeling of being an objekt of chariti to make it posibl to restore to helth and eficiensi meni of our best educational workers at a cost no greater than their home living expenses, or perhaps les.

Milionth man quest. The histori & destini of the world is chiefli shaped by a veri fu. From the 110,000,000 in America, if we took the 110 who influenst it most we shd chanje American & world histori. This millionth man comes ofenest from the humblest home. We want to make a distinkt efort to fynd wherever hiden, the boy or girl who givs promis of being a great leader & bring him to Placid in the fynest clymat with the best skools & develop his abiliti as near as posibl to 100%. If his parents can pay all or part of the expense, wel; if not, the trustees wil feed, clothe, fit for & send him thru colej from the Foundation, feeling sure that now & then it wil serv the world mytili by fynding a milionth man.

Seedsowing. We hav had members & gests from 46 states and 26 nations. Over 10,000 come each year & more than eni resort they ar known to represent leadership, & this distinktion is growing greater everi year. They ar here at leisure for vakation sumr & winter under ideal conditions for comparison of views & agrement on things that need to be dun for publik welfare. Alredi sum improvements that hav had mor than national influence has started here, & we believ our plans, plant, facilites & oportunities wil insure that mor & mor the Club will be a rekognyzd center for this vytali important seedsowing which means educating the publik, often by long laborius process that reqyr much tym, til it demands & secures the things most worth.<sup>15</sup>

Obviously the proposals stated above must have seemed idealistic and impractical to other members, particularly the point concerning the upbringing and education of the "millionth man." Later, when the foundation was officially chartered, its statement of purposes was modified and made realistic as follows:

"1. To aid and restore to health and educational efficiency teachers, librarians and other educators of moderate means who have become incapacitated by overwork.

"2. To establish, maintain and aid schools, libraries or other educational institutions, specially at Lake Placid.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



"3. To institute, organize or foster other movements to advance public welfare thru education by means of the Foundation press, conference, forums, addresses, guided reading and similar agencies."<sup>16</sup>

With Melvil and Annie Dewey transferring "everi share of the voting stok of the Lake Placid Club" and additional endowments contributed by others interested in the aims and activities of the Foundation, the newly established Foundation actually acquired control of Lake Placid estates and the policies and management of the Club entirely. Furthermore, Melvil and Annie Dewey's deed of gift provided that the Foundation should so exercise its control to insure

that Lake Placid Company can never become a mere money making Corporation nor Lake Placid Club an ordinary summer and winter resort, but that both shall forever be conducted so to contribute to the Foundation work not only their yearly earnings in money but equally their influence and example in promoting those purposes for which the Foundation was created.<sup>17</sup>

Originally named the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, the organization was granted a provisional charter by the University of the State of New York on January 26, 1922. Based on its satisfactory progress in establishment and maintenance of schools and fulfillment of other corporate aims, on February 17, 1927, the Regents of the University granted a permanent charter as a part of the higher education system of New York. The first trustees who incorporated the Foundation were: Melvil and Godfrey Dewey, Rev. William F. Slocum, Rev. Charles Parkhurst, social reformer, Edwin A. Alderman, president of University of Virginia, Arthur E. Bestor, president of Chautauqua Institution, Rev. Henry E.

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<sup>16</sup> Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, Lake Placid Club Education Foundation Report (Lake Placid, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1927), p.1.

<sup>17</sup> Godfrey Dewey, "Sixty Years of Lake Placid Club," p. 10.

Cobb, Emily Beal (since 1924 Mrs. Melvil Dewey); Virginia C. Gildersleeve, dean of Barnard College, Ira A. Plinner, Education Director of the Foundation and headmaster of Northwood School; Hamilton Holt, president of Rollins College; Henri LaFontaine, senator from Brussels, Belgium; Benjamin T. Marshall, president of Connecticut College; George Foster Peabody, and others.<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Emily Dewey, Arthur E. Bestor and Henry W. Holmes, dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, became presidents of the Foundation successionaly after the death of Dewey. Legally the Foundation was governed by the trustees to safeguard the integrity of the institution and the interest of the Club, and to apply available resources to the distinctive educational purposes as stated in the charter.

Restoration.--The first among the three major purposes originally intended, that of restoration to health and efficiency of educators, is perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Club and made it unique among educational functions. In a letter to the editor of the Library Journal, Dewey carefully explained its objectives and characteristics as follows:

. . . LP Club was never planed for a hospital or sanitarium or a home for permanent invalids. Our thot was profilactic, to cure in advance the thretend exhaustion. That yu say wd be a great boom. For 37 years we hav refused to admit thoz afliktet with tuberculosis or other diseases that myt be transmitted or that wd anoy felo members. But we aim speciali to create an ideal place for the overytyrd wher they cd best be restored to working efisiensi. Yu speak of the Club as not being inexpensiv. Our certifiyd reports for last year sho total receipts of \$3,656,866 & total expenses of \$38,447 mor than this. It is imensli expensiv to maintain what we ar now reported to be, the best cooperativ famili club & offering mor atraktions & fasilities than eni other in the world. Veri fu librarians hav incum enuf to pay their pro rata share of thez imense aktual costs.

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<sup>18</sup> Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, Report, 1927, p. i.

Yet the 1st objekt of the Club in 1895 was to restore to working efisiensi thoz who wer showing the results of too long or too hard work.

We nu 37 years ago that most librarians wer limited in resources. Our pryse the 1st year wer less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  what they ar today & no one has ever had eni profit from them. But people of means wer atrakted by our standards, "everithing for safeti, helth, comfort & convenience but absolutili nothing for mere fashion or display." Our chief slogan was "simplisiti." People of ampl means wer atrakted by Club standards & askt to cum in. They began to ask for meni dezyrabl things that cost muni which they wer qyt wiling to pay & soon most peopl forgot the real purpose of the Club & thot of it onli as a famus resort of the wel-to-do & with unusual standards.

We hav all thez years been of great servis to meni entytld to the help of our Restoration dpt which has been giving 20 to \$30,000 a year to making posibl vacations otherwyz out of reach of sum of our most efsient librarians & others doing the world's best work, usuali for les than  $\frac{1}{2}$  the salaries paid for equal abiliti in buznes. . . .

Approacht with this librari coloni idea our trustees felt ful simpathi & promptli ofered to giv free land & varius Club fasilities provyded it did not increas the living costs of members who wer paying the imense overhed, e.g., a concert costing \$500 wdn't cost our members a \$ mor if atended by skors of librarians who wd at no cost whatever hylil appreciate the privilej.<sup>19</sup>

Dewey was not the only one concerned about these details. His son Godfrey also explained their operating principle:

Roughly half of the Club's operating costs consist of overhead or fixed charges -- my father often pointed out that a symphony concert costs no more if listened to by a thousand than by a hundred -- so that once the Club is safely operating beyond the break-even point, much help can be given to those who deserve and require it without imposing any additional burden on those for whom the Club is primarily operated.<sup>20</sup>

Another article also supports this account:

In all this great development of his early idea, Melvil Dewey has never lost sight of his original aim, that of restoring to working efficiency the educator class -- the kind of people who are

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<sup>19</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Library Colony at Lake Placid," Library Journal 56 (June 1931): 551.

<sup>20</sup>Godfrey Dewey, "Sixty Years at Lake Placid Club," p. 11.

trying to make a better world, and doing it on limited incomes. But he realized that his project couldn't be carried through without larger support than his original clients were able to give. . . . So he accepted the applications of the well-to-do people, added more comforts and such luxuries as were most in demand, and still kept the prices at a minimum that is astonishing to anyone accustomed to the ordinary hotel and resort rates. . . .

. . . their splendid orchestras, the Boston Symphony Ensemble of fourteen selected musicians for the concerts; the popular dance septette which play eight times a week; the \$30,000 organ, played by one of the finest concert organists in the country, whose music is heard in any one of four places, the Agora theater, the Chapel, the East Lawn or the Forest dining room; the Agora theater, seating 1,200 and built at a cost of \$175,220; the extensive and sturdy Forest club house; lakeside, with its inspiring view over Lake Placid, set at the foot of Cobble and Sentinel mountains; Cascade club house, built at the highest elevation of any of the other dwellings, Riversea club house, the beautiful branch club house at Old Saybrook, Connecticut. . . .<sup>21</sup>

All these facilities were available to educational workers at minimal or no cost. Among these, the Riversea Club at Old Saybrook Peninsula, Connecticut, was managed by Emily M. Beal. After more than ten years' continuous loss of investment, this branch was closed. Two years after the death of Annie Godfrey Dewey in 1922, Mrs. Beal married Dewey and became his ablest assistant in New York and also at Lake Placid Club in Florida, but that is another story.

An early example of the effectiveness of the Club's Restoration feature was the case of Katharine Sharp, the founder and director of the School of Library Economics, professor of library science, and director of the university library at the University of Illinois. Miss Sharp's dedication to her various educational programs and her tendency to overwork led her to the point of frequent mental and physical exhaustion. From 1896 to 1906 she was forced by friends repeatedly to

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<sup>21</sup>"Lake Placid Club - One Man's Dream," p. 24.

take a brief rest at Lake Placid whenever she was near a breakdown.<sup>22</sup>

Every time after a much needed vacation in the Adirondack Mountains, Miss Sharp regained her health and strength and was able to resume her hard work at the University of Illinois and her other extension programs. On September 1, 1907, the worn-out Katharine Sharp finally resigned from her multiple duties at Illinois and stayed with the Dewey family. She came to love Lake Placid so much that she took up Dewey's offer to be the second vice-president of the Club where her extraordinary organizing and managerial ability was much appreciated. Under their years of co-operation, it was acknowledged that

. . . the Club became the center for concert artists and a club theatre attracted drama groups and larger musical organizations. Educational conferences were held at Lake Placid. . . . To all of these developments, Katharine Sharp contributed her ability and judgment, and, as Dewey recalled, she "took a leading part in making our great dream come true."<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, Katharine Sharp died in 1914 of an automobile accident in the mountains. Her estate was executed by Dewey and later bequeathed to the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation. Perhaps this story explained Dewey's motive of making Restoration a major purpose of the Foundation. One source states:

The second Foundation purpose, to aid in restoring to health and educational efficiency teachers, librarians, clergymen . . . who have become incapacitated by overwork has been largely realized in the 3 years since its first announcement was made. Several hundred belonging to these professions have taken advantage of these vacation plans. . . ."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Grotzinger, Katharine Sharp, pp. 257-267.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>24</sup>Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, Report, 1927, p. 6.

This 1927 Report also indicated:

The steady increase in the number seeking this privilege is making it necessary to serv first those whose need is most urgent. The Foundation makes an annual appropriation for use in covering part of the regular charges, according to individual need, thus bringing prices within the means of those who come. It is believed by many educators who hav seen the plan in practical operation that it is rendering a distinct and valuable contribution to the cause of education. The plan will be continued during coming years in the mesure of the Foundation's ability to set apart funds for the purpose.<sup>25</sup>

This plan was indeed continued during the coming years, as the 1929 Foundation Report proves:

Use of Club property by teachers, librarians, clergymen and other social or religious workers, for much needed vacations, is an educational service of immense value as proven annually by scores of spoken and written testimonies. This plan is intended to restore such workers to their normal working powers by means of a vacation spent in the midst of the Club's usual inspiring environment. Many who come annually to attend the conventions held in Spring and Fall make a vacation of their visit, often come in late June or early July, or at Easter. Some come to recuperate from illness, an operation, or overwork. Last year 110 took advantage of this restoration plan. Their Foundation allowances from usual members' rates were \$6635 or 52%.

Such Foundation service in entertainment of educational agencies and leaders is accomplisht at les crowded seasons when Club facilities ar fully enjoyed but when Club has space for their accommo-  
dation with least inconvenience to Club members. To make such opportunity more readily available a plan is now being outlined by which inexpensiv bungalos may be bilt by or for those engaged in educational vocations, to be reservd for use at their customary vacation periods, at a cost not involving undue sacrifice in relation to their usually meager salaries.<sup>26</sup>

Even after the death of Dewey and the reorganization of the Club, this policy was kept. In 1947 it was reported that

. . . a major purpose of L.P.C. has been to afford to educational workers and other public servants opportunities for rest and relaxation which they could not obtain at this place without reduction of the customary charges in their favor. The presence at the Club

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>26</sup>Idem, Report, 1929, p. 48.

of university professors, teachers and administrators from public school systems and from private schools, clergymen of various denominations, librarians, social service workers, artists, musicians and other professional people is in itself an enrichment of Club life. Those who come to the Club under this policy are listed as Foundation Affiliates. Many have contributed in substantial and specific ways to the values of the institution. . . . The fact that a teacher or member of some other professional group is at the Club is not in itself an indication that he is a Foundation Affiliate; the list is not made public, nor is the reduction of rates under this policy marked by any arrangement distinguishing the Affiliates from other Club members or guests.<sup>27</sup>

The 1947 Report went on to reaffirm that

. . . the Trustees of the Foundation regard the policy of offering restorations in this manner as an essential function of the institution as a whole, and they are deeply concerned to continue and perfect its operation.<sup>28</sup>

Apparently, Dewey's concern for educational workers was shared by his successors long after his death, and the Lake Placid Club, in a unique and unmeasurable way, did contribute to the welfare and morale of educators (as broadly defined by Dewey) for many decades.

Schools and Educational Institutions.--Another major educational objective which the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation proposed--"To establish, maintain and aid schools, libraries or other educational institutions, especially at Lake Placid," was more conventional and its chief example, the Northwood School, is still operating successfully as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Foundation today. Other schools and projects were maintained for various periods of time by the Foundation at Lake Placid.

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<sup>27</sup>Report of a Special Committee of the Board of Trustees, Lake Placid Club Education Foundation: The Work of the Foundation, Its Relation to the Club and the Company and Its Opportunities, Responsibilities and Outlook, by Henry W. Holmes, Chairman (Lake Placid, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1947), pp. 19-20.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

Originally founded by John M. Hopkins, a graduate of Yale, in 1905, the Northwood School for Boys was housed for a number of years in various buildings of the Lake Placid Club with a winter term in Florida. In 1925, after twenty years of successful operation in a small scale, the school was taken over by the Foundation under the direct supervision of Dr. Ira A. Flinner, educational director of the Lake Placid Club. Since then its migratory plan was abandoned and a year-round operation was established. To accommodate the growing needs of the School, the property of the former Lake Placid School for Boys, then occupied by the Montemare School for Girls, was acquired by the Foundation.<sup>29</sup> This property included twenty acres of land, a modern school building with fine gymnasium, courts and other facilities for physical exercise and training. Besides, all facilities of the Club were made available to the School. These included a 10,000-volume library, musical and lecture programs, care by medical and nursing personnel, chapel services, use of athletic fields and the Olympic sports arena, dormitory and other benefits. With the full support of the Foundation, the School grew from twenty-five boys in 1925 to forty-five boys in 1926, then was increased to eighty-five during the 1929-30 school year.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the regular Northwood School, there was the Summer School for Boys, the Dalton Day School, the kindergarten and the nursery school for the benefit of families with children in residence

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<sup>29</sup> Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, Report, 1927, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, Lake Placid Club in the Adirondacks, Yearbook 1929 (Lake Placid, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1930), p. 49.



at the Lake Placid Club. The Summer School for Boys was started in 1926 to prepare boys individually and in classes for college entrance and to advance them in their earlier studies. Beginning with thirty-three boys in 1926, it enrolled fifty in 1928 and became a permanent feature of the Foundation's educational program. The Dalton Day School was also started in 1926 as an integral part of permanent Foundation plans. It enabled families visiting the Club for any period of time during the school year to provide instruction for their children while absent from home, and to deliver them on return to their home schools fully abreast of their classes. To meet individual needs, personal guidance and individualized instruction were given to children in these schools.<sup>31</sup>

During the summer of 1926, four other educational projects were initiated by the Foundation. These were the kindergarten, the nursery school, and the "Parents Institute" offering series of lectures by prominent educators on educational subjects, and an educational clinic conducted by the Education Director. The clinic gave mental measurement tests to children, and the tests were followed by conferences with parents to outline an educational program for their children in the light of the results of the tests. Obviously this was Dewey's original idea of the "millionth man quest," as he told visitors confidently:

Our new schools is part of this plan. It is an effort to find the Millionth Man! Do you realize that it is 'the one man in a million' that is leading in all the big work of the world? Our idea is to search out the boys who might become some of these millionth men, if they were given the necessary equipment in health,

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<sup>31</sup>Idem, Report, 1927, pp. 4-5.

and in mental and moral training. These are the things they ought to have; and they are the things we are trying to give them.<sup>32</sup>

The annual reports of the Foundation also repeated the same viewpoint and special provision was made for the "millionth man quest" at Lake Placid:

The Foundation plans to find potential leadership in children and then bring them to schools where mind, body and soul will be brought to highest efficiency. If parents can not afford to pay part of the cost the plan includes scholarship aid.<sup>33</sup>

On another occasion, Melvil Dewey explained his idea of talent education in this way:

A child of extra fine brain often has too much nerv power for its body, & in most climates, especially in cities, comes out of colej a weakling, of little servis to the world. If the same child cud spend 10 or 12 of his erlier years in an ideal climate, like that of Lake Placid, he wd come out with helth & strength that might make him a leader in his cuntry & generation. There shud be scools of different grades, with endowments, & when an unusually promising girl or boy with little or no money is found, they shud be sent here & educated at a minimum cost, because of their probable great value to the world. With trustees in various parts of the cuntry, such prizes cud often be found. Intellect & character shud be the basis for admission, no class distinction, based on wealth, being possible. Scholarships cud be founded for specially deservind & needy students.<sup>34</sup>

Table 2 (p.194) indicates the enrollment of the School and financial assistance given to needy students up to the death of Dewey and in the midst of the depression.

In addition, Northwood building extensions costing \$132,000 were completed in June, 1929, to accommodate the increasing enrollment of the senior school. Plans to enlarge the junior school were also adopted by the Foundation under Dewey's management.

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<sup>32</sup>Gray, "That Darned Literary Fellow," p. 132.

<sup>33</sup>Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, Yearbook, 1928, p. 60.

<sup>34</sup>Melvil Dewey, "My Plan for Seed Sowing," (Typewritten note dated 1928), p. 3. Melvil Dewey Papers.

TABLE 2

## OPERATIONS OF NORTHWOOD SCHOOL, 1925-1931

Academic Year	1925/26	1926/27	1927/28	1928/29	1929/30	1930/31
Students enrolled	35	46	51	67	85	80
Number of scholarships	15	18	19	21	18	15
Total amount granted	17,510	17,800	18,950	18,352	15,430	12,150
Tuition paid	30,000	49,800	57,000	75,000	99,000	103,000

SOURCE: Adapted from Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, "Statement of Operations for Fiscal Year Ending 30 June 1931." Melvil Dewey Papers.

Naturally, such educational provision and school facilities so strained the budget of the over-extended Club that Godfrey Dewey, vice-president of the Foundation, pointed out:

However desirable the schools may be in the life of the Club, it is obviously impracticable for the Company to continue to carry on an annual deficit such as the \$27,000 estimated for the coming year. To meet this deficit by brute force of an endowment, without increasing numbers or lowering standards, would require an investment of \$450,000.<sup>35</sup>

In spite of the financial burden, the various schools and educational programs were still supported by the Foundation. After the death of Dewey and the reorganization of the Club, Godfrey commented upon the management of the Club by his father as follows:

. . . his willingness to spend next year's income year before last, if he could see a chance of getting it back thereafter, kept

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<sup>35</sup> Godfrey Dewey to Lake Placid Co. Directors, August 18, 1928. Melvil Dewey Papers.

the Club in a chronically precarious financial condition, in spite of its unexampled prosperity, during most of the years prior to his death.<sup>36</sup>

But then Dewey was under constant pressure to maintain the schools and the distinctive ideals and standards of the Club, for these were the attractions of the Club and the intrinsic purposes of the Foundation which he established. When Dr. Ira Flinner confronted him in 1931 with the question of "giving up skools" or additional personal and financial support, Dewey told him definitely that: "We want skool & yu to run it." Yet Dewey could not help but explain that, in the midst of budget deficits and world depression,

. . . you are wholi reasonabl in asking  $\frac{1}{2}$  milion for plant & 2 milion for endowment & we all hope for it, but to spend the incum on that endowment before we hav it is to invyt disaster & to skare peopl, pyl up bills that can't be paid.<sup>37</sup>

Even then, seven months before his death and deep in financial troubles, Dewey did not slow down his attempt to expand his Lake Placid Club and his educational ideals. In a forceful letter to town commissioners and clerks in his Lake Placid South, Florida, Dewey persuaded the town fathers to cooperate with him in building another Lake Placid Club and he assured them that

. . . when fairli started it will bring 100s of teachers yearli to Placid. Yu wil all be proud of it and it wil help yu materiali by building an ideal home for 100s who cd not hav aforded  $\frac{1}{2}$  what it has cost at 7 Lakes to cover expense. Land Co. wil giv the land; club wil giv its great facilities free whenever it can without injustis to gests who ar paying regular pryses. The succes depends on town & state exempting from taxes as law clearli provyds.

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<sup>36</sup> Godfrey Dewey, "Sixty Years of Lake Placid Club," p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Melvil Dewey to Ira A. Flinner, April 31, 1931. Melvil Dewey Papers.

We sunk \$100,000 in 5 years runing our splendid boys skool Northwood. Auditors carefulli chekt the things that cost muni but had not been charjd to the skool & found in 5 years about \$50,000 mor.<sup>38</sup>

Regrettably, the national depression and the death of Dewey on December 26, 1931 cut short his plans of expansion in Florida, and the Northwood School today remains a small college preparatory school with exceptional athletic programs and excellent scholarship. It was reported in 1947 that among the 309 boys graduated from the School, 305 had entered colleges of their choice.<sup>39</sup> Since 1971, the School has accepted both resident and day girls in all classes, for the School is purposefully kept small, permitting close personal supervision and individual guidance. With only 137 students ranging from ages thirteen to nineteen recently, this School attracted exceptional students from a wide area. As stated in its current bulletin: "One important object of the School is to select and educate students of unusual ability, but of limited means, via scholarship grants of varying amounts"<sup>40</sup> given by the Lake Placid Education Foundation. An independent Board of Trustees now oversees the development of the School and upholds the tradition--a tradition handed down by Melvil Dewey. By virtue of its location in the Adirondack Mountains, the School offers young people a simplicity and directness of daily life which enables each student to realize his highest potential, and to develop independence of thought and scholarship.

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<sup>38</sup> Melvil Dewey to Town Commissioners, Clerk and attorney of Lake Placid, Florida, May 22, 1931. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>39</sup> Report of a Special Committee, by Henry W. Holmes, 1947, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> The Northwood School, The Northwood School (Lake Placid, N.Y.: n.p., 1978?), p. 7.

Incidentally, it is pertinent to note that some other financial assistance was given by Dewey to outside educational institutes. For instance, a Melvil Dewey scholarship was established at Amherst College endowed by Dewey; an assistantship was given by him to the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute for needy students in the South.<sup>41</sup>

Seedsowing activities.--The third group of educational activities of the Foundation was termed "seedsowing" by Dewey. The Foundation's chartered purposes defined this as "to institute, organize or foster other movements to advance public welfare thru education by means of the Foundation press, conferences, forum, addresses, guided reading and similar agencies." Some of the important seedsowing activities of the Foundation were found in the following categories:

1. Simpler Spelling of English
2. Metric reform
3. Decimal Classification and Forest Press
4. International Institute of Bibliography and the foreign adaptations of Decimal Classification
5. Library conferences
6. Educational forum and lecture programs
7. World Center and Union of International Associations
8. Home and institution economics
9. Calendar reform
10. Adirondack music festivals
11. Conservation and environment protection
12. Health and care of children and adults

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<sup>41</sup>Letters from Booker T. Washington to Melvil Dewey, see Appendixes K and L.

While it is true that some of the activities listed here may not be purely educational, and some of the educational activities are deemed too minor to be discussed, nevertheless, these were the typical programs which the Foundation fostered, and one can easily see the comprehensiveness of the Foundation and the wholesome activities that made the Club so popular among its educated members. For Dewey, education was not limited to activities within the walls of a school, nor should there be any boundary for self improvement or improvement of one's tools and techniques. He wanted to sow the seeds of reform among men by using the Club as a greenhouse, the Education Foundation the fertilizer, and the whole world his classroom.

Since both Melvil and Godfrey Dewey were ardent believers in simplification of English spelling, Lake Placid became the national headquarters of such organizations for more than seventy years. Melvil Dewey was a trustee of the Simplified Spelling Board (founded in 1906, to which Andrew Carnegie gave more than \$250,000) and secretary of the Spelling Reform Association (founded in 1876). Godfrey Dewey was the secretary and a trustee of the Simplified Spelling Board. The two organizations merged in 1946 and became the Simpler Spelling Association of America, with Godfrey as secretary and Lake Placid its permanent headquarters.

From 1906 to 1931, many conferences of these organizations were held at Lake Placid and their literature were largely distributed from there. Spelling, the quarterly magazine was edited and mailed from the Foundation when issued. As expected, daily, weekly, monthly and occasional publications of the Club and Foundation were printed in simpler

spelling. The changes Dewey advocated were presented in their extreme form, and they not only amazed but actually shocked many people. Simplified spellings in dinner menus and Club literature naturally provided an interesting topic of conversation which would lead to serious discussion among members and guests. In a way, there was a measure of advertising value comparable to such old trademarks as "His master's voice" or "Ask the man who owns one" by which both the Club and simplified spellings were made known far and wide. After the death of Dewey, however, the movement lost its impetus and the use of simplified spellings at Lake Placid was greatly curtailed. Even though, in 1942, the Board of Trustees of the Foundation approved a proposal by Godfrey Dewey that a minimal degree of actual use of simpler spellings be made at the Club and taught in the Lake Placid Schools, especially the twelve words adopted by the National Education Association in 1898, that resolution was soon neglected. While Godfrey still carried on the campaign of spelling reform at Lake Placid, his effort seemed somewhat like -- in his own words -- "a bald-headed barber selling hair restorer."<sup>42</sup>

As already discussed fully in Chapter III, another "seed sowing" activity supported by the Foundation was metric education. The Club adopted metrics completely in all weights and measures. The Foundation sponsored many conferences on metrication and provided facilities for the Metric Association meetings. Dewey himself wrote many articles and delivered numerous speeches for the Association. Little wonder that when the Association decided to honor metric pioneers during their second annual dinner, the menu appeared as follows:

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<sup>42</sup>Godfrey Dewey, "Sixty Years of Lake Placid Club," p. 11.



"Chicken Consomme with Rise, a la Thomas Jefferson	8 grams
"Sliced Tenderloin of Beef, a la Tallyrand	52 grams
"Parissien Potatoes, F.A.P. Barnard	2 grams
"Assorted Cakes, Melvil Dewey	38 grams" <sup>43</sup>

Indeed, Melvil Dewey became such a household name in connection with metric measures, his letter of testimony was read in Congress on behalf of the Britten Metric Standards Bill in 1926, along with such names as Thomas A. Edison, Henry Ford, Charles W. Eliot, Joy Elmer Morgan and others.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, the Britten Bill, calling for the use of metric weights and measures in the buying and selling of commodities, was not passed, and Dewey resumed passionately his seed sowing for metric reform till the year he died. When the Winter Olympic Games came to Lake Placid in 1932, a year after the death of Dewey, the metric system was adopted exclusively for use during the games. The same year the American Amateur Athletic Union also voted for the use of metrics in track and field events. In a way, Melvil Dewey was successful in sowing metric seeds, at least in his own home ground.

Of all the seed sowing activities fostered at Lake Placid, the publications of the Dewey Decimal Classification was the only program that brought in revenue and became so successful that it is still in business today. Within the last one hundred years, eighteen major

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<sup>43</sup>American Metric Association, Second Annual Meeting, "Dinner Menu," Pittsburgh, Pa., July 10, 1917. (Typewritten). Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>44</sup>"Metric System Bill Expounded," Christian Science Monitor, 9 June 1926.

editions have been published by the Foundation through its Forest Press Division. In addition, numerous adaptations, abridged editions and translated versions were published in the United States and abroad. Table 3 tabulates this data.

TABLE 3  
PUBLISHING HISTORY OF THE DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION

Edition	Date	Total pages	Copies printed	Editor
1	1876	42	1,000	Melvil Dewey
2	1885	314	500	Melvil Dewey
3	1888	416	500	Melvil Dewey
4	1891	466	1,000	May Seymour
5	1894	467	2,000	May Seymour
6	1899	511	7,600	May Seymour
7	1911	792	2,000	May Seymour
8	1913	850	2,000	May Seymour
9	1915	856	3,000	May Seymour
10	1919	940	4,000	May Seymour
11	1922	988	5,000	Dorkas Fellows
12	1927	1,243	9,340	Dorkas Fellows
13	1932	1,647	9,750	Dorkas Fellows
14	1942	1,927	15,632	Constantin Mazney
15	1951	716	11,200	Milton Ferguson
15 rev.	1952	927	11,045	Godfrey Dewey
16	1958	2,439	31,011	Benjamin Custer
17	1965	2,153	38,677	Benjamin Custer
18	1971	2,718	42,000 est.	Benjamin Custer
19	1979			

SOURCE: Adopted from John P. Comaromi, The Eighteen Editions of the Dewey Decimal Classification (Albany, N.Y.: Forest Press Division, Lake Placid Education Foundation, 1976), p.x.

It was said that at Lake Placid Club, where for many years the editorial work was done, May Seymour was known as the "Specialist in Omiscience," and Dorkas Fellows as the "Walking Encyclopedia." Seymour died in 1921 after spending thirty-two years editing the

Classification. Acknowledging her outstanding contribution, Melvil

Dewey later stated:

Mrs Seymour had a steadily growing wish to make D C a permanent force for education, by greatly improving its full, short and outline editions, and by printing cheap special editions (index) for many prominent divisions; e.g., education, medicine, engineering, agriculture. As a memorial to her, all copyrights and control of all editions have been given to Lake Placid Club Education Foundation. . . . Under Foundation auspices future editions of D C will be published, on absolute condition that entire receipts above necessary expenses be used forever solely for improving D C and extending its usefulness, thereby preventing possibility that the work should ever be made a source of either individual or institution profit. A committee on D C, consisting of the interested Foundation trustees, in consultation with committees of American Library Association and Institut International de Bibliographie, will insure observance of the above condition.<sup>45</sup>

So it was under such provision, financial support for the future issues of D.C. was secured. Forest Press Division, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Foundation, was incorporated in 1933 to carry out the publishing and marketing of the D.C. In addition the Press also functions as a professional service office for libraries and bibliographers needing special adaptations, translations and other assistances. Recent activities of the Press included sponsoring surveys of the uses of D.C. in the U.S. and abroad, classification conferences and seminars in the States and overseas. For example, a survey has shown that 85.4% of libraries in the U.S. and Canada use D.C. while the remaining 14.6% use the Library of Congress Classification; School and public libraries use D.C. almost exclusively.<sup>46</sup> While some large U.S. libraries converted

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<sup>45</sup> Melvil Dewey, Decimal Classification and Relative Index, 11th ed. (Lake Placid Club, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1922), p. 44.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Ellen Michael, "Summary of a Survey of the Use of the Dewey Decimal Classification in the United States and Canada," Paper presented at the Allerton Park Institute, on Major Classification Systems, Sponsored by Forest Press and the University of Illinois, Monticello, Illinois, 9-12 November 1975, pp. 47-58.

from D.C. to the Library of Congress system, the adoption of D.C. abroad increased significantly. Many editions of the D.C. have been translated in numerous languages and used in more than 110 countries, from Afghanistan to Zambia.

Actually the expansion of D.C. in foreign countries began in 1896 with the French adaptation Classification Decimale by the International Institute of Bibliography in Brussels, as a classification system for the worldwide repertory of all human knowledge in all languages. This was the beginning of the productive but occasionally troublesome relationship between the editors of the D.C. and the foreign adaptations of Decimal Classification. Though Melvil and Godfrey Dewey tried consistently to reach concordance between the American and French editions, they never achieved any satisfactory result through their editors. Even though D.C. and other translations are not identical in their assignment of numbers and detail subject arrangements, they are, nevertheless, the basic decimal classification system formed by Dewey to organize human knowledge in different languages for different countries or purposes.

While at Lake Placid, after resigning from public service, Dewey still kept an active interest in educational organizations and library activities. The Club became an ideal gathering place for such associations. A "Library Week at Lake Placid" was arranged annually and it served purposes of professional development and personal restoration for participants. It was so described by a library journal of the occasion of the tenth annual Library Week held at Lake Placid:

In trying to write again of library week at Lake Placid Club in the Adirondacks, one feels that the beauty and pleasure and

delights of the place and time and people outnumber the choice of words to tell of it. In all the land there is nothing more restful, more beautiful, more satisfying than the combination of lake and mountain and field and forest under skies that rise and dip and cover all the plane of vision with a color and atmosphere that is a delight to the soul. To one not burdened with the duty of making the meeting serve its special purpose it must prove a week of satisfying rest to body and spirit. The program this year was fuller and heavier than usual; this was well for the enthusiastic seeker after the library lore, but made much work for the officers; still the latter seemed to enjoy it, so an outsider need not complain.

There were about 130 persons interested registered, and the night meetings were well attended. . . . Mr. Dewey gave his usual happy welcome, recalling the fact of its being the tenth library meeting held there, and hoped the decimal system would be carried out and the convention assemble ten times ten years.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, informal round-table conferences on educational subjects of common interest were led by eminent educators in the club house. There was also a traditional program of public lectures given by scholars, and proposals were advanced for forums or conferences on current social issues and problems. A Forum Committee was set up to organize and finance such activities. Such an arrangement was clearly outlined in the Foundation Report:

Conferences and Conventions. Closely related to the 'restoration' feature of the Foundation program is that of entertaining conferences and conventions whose organizations are engaged in work in close harmony with Foundation aims. In this policy the Foundation encourages education by placing Club facilities freely at the disposal of these agencies at a cost usually far below prices available elsewhere. Over 4000 guests came to the Club at such conferences during 1925-26, 57% of their expenses being assumed by the Foundation.

It is thus possible to encourage movements of utmost value to the cause of organized education while giving to the individuals attending the inspiration and physical benefits of a brief vacation in the mountains, enriched by unusual opportunities to hear the best

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<sup>47</sup>"Library Week at Lake Placid," Public Library 9 (November 1904): 455.

of music and enjoy other parts of the Club program. Whenever the attendance of its members is not too large to pre-empt rooming accommodations the Foundation is ready, upon satisfactory sponsorship to cooperate with organizations of teachers, librarians, religious leaders, scientists and other humanitarian workers by giving them a convention home.

The Report listed the organizations that had benefitted from the Foundation:

Prominent among the organizations using the Foundation convention privileges recently have been the National Metric Association, the N Y State Library Association, N Y State Superintendents Association, Essex Co. Teachers Association, Foreign Department of the National Council of the Y M C A, Northern N Y Music Festival, and the N Y State Federation of Women's Clubs.

During the last 2 years 180 leaders in the vocational fields recognized by the Foundation have entered into full Club membership privileges by gift of the Foundation.<sup>48</sup>

Besides being the headquarters of the spelling reform movement, the Lake Placid Club was a chapter of the English-Speaking Union and the Foundation arranged annual "lectures on subjects fostering good will between English-speaking peoples."<sup>49</sup> Moreover, as an active member of the International Auxiliary Language Association, Melvil Dewey shared the obsession of the organization that English as the international auxiliary language in foreign lands would prevail, and he further believed that simplified spellings would facilitate its general acceptance for international intercourse. Both Melvil and Godfrey Dewey, therefore, were enthusiastically engaged in the promotion of one form of such English planned for use in foreign countries -- the Anglic, invented by R. E. Zachrisson, professor of English in the Royal University of Uppsala, Sweden. Following some correspondence with Professor Zachrisson, Godfrey

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<sup>48</sup> Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, Report, 1927, pp. 7-8.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-10.

was sent to London to organize an international conference between the Simplified Spelling Society and the Anglic Association in 1930.<sup>50</sup>

Naturally, the conference received the blessing of the Simplified Spelling Board, and an Anglic fund was organized abroad for spreading the knowledge and use of Anglic over the world for "international cooperation and peaceful intercourse among the nations."<sup>51</sup> Also in keeping with the belief of both Melvil and Godfrey Dewey, the promotional work of such organizations as the World Peace Foundation and the Union of International Associations was fostered by the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation.<sup>52</sup>

Besides serving as the center of international associations, Lake Placid was well known as the birthplace of the home economics movement. The Lake Placid Conferences on Home Economics from 1899 to 1908 led to the founding of the American Home Economics Association, and Melvil and Annie Dewey were among the founders and organizers of the association. As early as 1896, while serving as secretary of the Board of Regents of the State of New York, Dewey had considered giving household science a place in the examination for college entrance. Ellen Henrietta Richards, an early crusader of "euthenics" -- the science of bettering the environment of living conditions, was invited by Dewey to his summer camp at Lake Placid to discuss the examination. So,

. . . this gave Mrs. Richards an opportunity to present her reforms to an educational leader. In 1898 during one of Mrs.

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<sup>50</sup> Godfrey Dewey, English Spelling: Roadblock to Reading (N.Y.: Teachers College Press, 1971), pp. 26-27.

<sup>51</sup> Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 276.

<sup>52</sup> Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, Report, 1927, p. 10.

Richards' visits with the Deweys she was invited to speak on domestic problems before several Lake Placid Club members. In the discussion which followed, it was suggested that a number of trained workers meet for annual conferences.

Through the generous hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Dewey these conferences were made possible. The following summer, 1899, eleven persons (four Lake Placid Club members and seven outsiders) met to make home economics history. . . .

From the beginning the purpose of the conference was to study the economic and social problems of the home and the problems of right living. Problems facing this pioneer group were teacher training; courses of study for the different schools -- elementary, secondary, colleges, state agricultural colleges, evening schools, vacation schools; the extension and rural school programs; home economics in women's clubs and home education for citizenship.<sup>53</sup>

The first Lake Placid conference on home economics was vividly described by Ruth C. Hall, president of the American Home Economics Association, sixty-five years later when the Association revisited the Club to commemorate that special occasion at Lake Placid:

Sixty-five years ago, in 1899, according to the proceedings of the First Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics, ' . . . the trustees of the Lake Placid Club at Morningside N.Y., believing that the time was ripe for some united action on the part of those most interested in home science, or household economics, sent out invitations to a conference on this important sociologic problem to be held at their clubhouse September 19 to 25'.

Professor Hall thus went on to acknowledge the role Dewey played at the Conference by pointing out that

Mr. Melvil Dewey in his welcome in behalf of the trustees gave many instances drawn from his own experience of the benefits to be derived from the cooperation and organization of those engaged in parallel lines of work. As executive officer of the University of the State of New York, and in close touch with educational affairs, Mr. Dewey reports a growing feeling that there is no more important

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<sup>53</sup>Hazel Thompson Craig, The History of Home Economics, ed. Blanche Stove (New York: Practical Home Economics, 1946), p. 9.



question before the American people than home science. He believes that those who can make the home all it should be will get nearer the foundations of life than even teachers, ministers and editors.<sup>54</sup>

From the little gathering in the boathouse in 1899, the conference was held consecutively for ten years, each time attracting more and more participants, ranging from teachers, scientists, writers and leaders in home economics. The tenth and most important Lake Placid Conference was held by invitation at Chautauqua, New York, in July, 1908. Living up to his outstanding organizing reputation, it was noted that

. . . near the close of the conference Mr. Dewey attempted to map out its future. He suggested: first, that a large national organization be formed with a monthly or quarterly publication to keep members informed on important movements; second, that the field be expanded to cover 'all that pertains to the general welfare and environment of the home'; third, that home economics cooperate in helping to develop mechanical devices to lighten housework; fourth, that home economists participate in eliminating the needless waste between producer and consumer.<sup>55</sup>

Its development so resembled the 1876 library conference that it was naturally that at the end of the conference Melvil Dewey's recommendations were passed unanimously:

It was voted that during the coming year the conference publish a small quarterly periodical to stimulate more interest in a national organization. It was voted also that the name of the organization be The American Home Economics Association.<sup>56</sup>

Thus the Association was founded and the movement soon covered "all that pertains to the general welfare and environment of the home," and then extended to institutional and business operations. In this

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<sup>54</sup>Ruth C. Hall, "Address Commemorating the 65th Anniversary of the First Lake Placid Conference on Home Economics," Journal of Home Economics 57 (January 1965): 17.

<sup>55</sup>Craig, The History of Home Economics, p. 20.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

case, the Foundation served only as the convention host of the Association and its allied groups. The Club, with its remarkable farms, dairies, cooking, dining and lodging facilities, became the best showcase.

The Foundation's effort with calendar reform was also in this class, since the movement for an improved twelve-month calendar had already made great progress. Melvil Dewey's personal interest was, however, in the thirteen-month calendar. During the early part of the century, there was a movement to improve the calendar to meet the needs of various occupations. Among the prevailing 137 different proposals to change the calendar by various groups, Melvil Dewey campaigned actively for the thirteen month, 60 six-day week calendar along with George Eastman, president of Kodak Company, in the National Committee on Calendar Simplification for the U. S.<sup>57</sup> The purpose was described as

. . . a plan theoretically superior but practically less feasible than the regularized twelve-month calendar, in which the year is divided into quarters, the month retain their present names, the first month of each quarter having thirty-one days, the others thirty. This plan has been endorsed by all the leading associations, learned and educational, of this country and the world, including the National Education Association and the League of Nations.<sup>58</sup>

Apparently, such calendar reform was just a fad, and Dewey's attempts to improve the calendar was in vain. In 1955, Godfrey Dewey explained the position the Foundation took in this way:

The function of the Foundation in connection with any such movement is to consider its merits, presentations dealing with

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<sup>57</sup>"National Committee on Calendar Simplification for the U.S." 1915 (typewritten), Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>58</sup>Godfrey Dewey, "Sixty Years of Lake Placid Club," p. 21.

current events or particular fields of national or local interest, including the American heritage program.<sup>59</sup>

One conspicuous Foundation achievement in community betterment and school enrichment was the program of Adirondack Music Festivals and the related work of the Foundation music missionary in the mid-1920's. It was so stated that

Very few Adirondack public schools had at that time any music department at all, and most of those which existed were pathetically weak. Church music also greatly needed some stimulus for improvement. A Foundation representative, the music missionary, Mrs. Maude Graff, who later married Chief Justice Walter P. Stacy of North Carolina, for many years a Foundation trustee, traveled for several thousands of miles back and forth across the Adirondacks, talking to teachers, principals, superintendents and school boards to encourage the introduction of music into schools, and talking also with clergy and organists and choir leaders about more and better music. Festivals at the Club for church music in the fall, school music in the spring, brought together organizations from a hundred-mile radius, filling the Agora to capacity, competing for banners, a sample of which hangs in the Founder's Room, and other awards, and receiving inspiration and instruction from gifted leaders.<sup>60</sup>

It was said that young talented students came to the Club "from the music departments of Cornell, Syracuse and other universities and from private teachers, to earn money for further study, and wait on table, finding time for rehearsals in the evening after supper, and singing in the choir. . . ." <sup>61</sup> The Club, with its fine facilities and well known musicians in residence, became a well known musical center and many programs were carried out, enthusiastically joined by members and outsiders. Besides the special children's concerts conducted by Daniel Kuntz, retired from the Boston Symphony, "there are six other concerts each week; one of chamber music. Every summer the orchestra

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-22.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>61</sup> Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 241.

gives one or more afternoon concerts at each of the four sanatoria in Saranac Lake and vicinity,"<sup>62</sup> All these activities were supported financially by the Foundation from 1923 through 1930. Unfortunately, the depression sharply curtailed and eventually discontinued the Foundation part of the program, but its work was largely accomplished and has left a permanent impression on the schools and churches of the Adirondack region.

After the depression, the musical program at Lake Placid began to revive through the efforts of Frederick T. Kelsey, president of the Club and chairman of the Music Committee, and by Arthur E. Bestor, while as president of the Foundation. In addition to the music provided as a regular feature at the Club, a Summer School of Music also had a quiet but long-continued place in the Foundation, as did art and drama programs.<sup>63</sup> In retrospect, all these cultural seeds were sowed by Melvil Dewey, who was not at all a musician himself, but realizing the need of education in music and the influence of fine arts, forged ahead and created a musical center in the wilderness.

To this wilderness Melvil and Annie Dewey first came in 1893 to escape hay fever and rose cold; then they were so fascinated by the Adirondack and its environment that they wanted to share this natural wonder with others. When the result of this summer gathering turned out to be more than 2000 club members with an estate of 10,600 acres and

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>63</sup>Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, Report of a Special Committee of the Board of Trustees (Lake Placid, N.Y.: Forest Press, 1947), p. 29.

over 400 buildings, environment protection and preservation became more than just a household problem. It was through the Deweys' careful planning and upkeep that Lake Placid remained unspoiled. Dewey's acquisitive ability enabled him to expand the estate to accommodate all the additions. As the club buildings and facilities increased, the Deweys carefully directed the development so that the landscape was enhanced rather than obscured or marred by the construction. He organized the Adirondack League, the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks, the billboard control group and the conservation society to keep the environment natural. It was in this natural environment that Dewey built up a cultural center with fine music, literature, schools for children and youth, outdoor sports for all seasons, non-denominational religious services, and high standards for living. As a result, the Lake Placid Club under Dewey's management became not just a resort but an ideal educational center, a haven for the physical, mental and spiritual care of the children, the youth and adult. The following remark by Boyd Edwards, headmaster of Mercersburg Academy, illustrated intelligently the characteristics of Melvil Dewey and his Lake Placid Club:

Institutions which stand must rest on something steadfast. Positive and simple qualities give foundationmen stability. Melvil Dewey was not only upright -- he was downright. He had positive standards, controlling convictions, persistent ideals, absolute fidelities and intelligent opinions. He had thought many fundamental questions clear through. He knew where he stood and he knew why -- a great characteristic. . . .

People who cherished high ideals as to influences and environment, both natural and moral, felt a deep confidence about making the Lake Placid Club a long-time all-summer home for their children. That, together with his happy sense of balance between simplicity and comfort, between natural beauty and artificial convenience, between bodily exercise and spiritual culture, gathered about him a loyal band of friends, counsellors and supporters who had character,

and were willing to make quality of life the chief objective to which every lesser thing should be sacrificed whenever necessary. The character, quality and spirit of the Lake Placid Club are his monument and its endurance in any distinguished sense will depend upon its essential fidelity to his characteristic and essential ideals.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Rev. Boyd Edwards, headmaster at Mercersburg Academy, at Lake Placid, N.Y., 1932. Quoted in Dawe, Melvil Dewey, p. 250.

## CHAPTER VII

### MELVIL DEWEY AND HIS EDUCATIONAL WORK

On his eightieth birthday Melvil Dewey was at the Florida branch of the Lake Placid Club. He marked the occasion by writing a circular letter to a few friends. Since it was written just half a month before he died, of cerebral hemorrhage on December 26, 1931, this final personal assessment provided an excellent summary of Dewey's educational ideals as well as his life and work. As this ten-page letter has not been published elsewhere, some lengthy quotations would seem appropriate in this concluding chapter.

"80th birthday letr, 10 Dec. 31, to a fu personal frends from our Florida branch, 7 Lakes, Lake Placid, Hylands Co., Fla.

"At 80 owing to the 5 winters I hav spent in this best clymat on erth I don't feel as old. . . . my mind is skoold not to wori. I profit by De Stael's dictum: 'The sumit of human hapines is to feel each nyt yu hav made sum progress toward a worthi ideal.'

". . . 40 years ago we counted 15 local, state or national organizations or movements of which the chief load was on me & my wyf had  $\frac{1}{2}$  as mani mor. Our wys fizician fearing overstrain or posibl break and made us both turn over most of thos jobs to associates.

"In all thez most of the real work has been dun by unusuali loyal co-workers. My share has been lyk a gadfly, to prod others into aktion. So the world has always givn me mor than my share of credit. Mani of thez loyal associates hav been jenerus in saying that they wer inspyrd rather than stung into their activ cooperation. Among skors of movements started or led by me 5 ar prominent.

Thus Dewey began to count his own contributions: The American Library Association, American Metric Bureau, Spelling Reform Association, three periodicals, and the Library Bureau.

"Librari Critisyzd for trying the imposibl in starting American Library Asn, for 15 years maid of all work & without salari, my burning faith & optimism kept the tredmil turning. Our monthli Library Journal to which was givn 5 strenuus years, twys in anser to its SOS when the publisher anounst its suspension, was kept alive by great personal sacrifys, til it has gone on to 56 stout volumes that hav playd a great part in the modern librari movement which from our beginnings has spred over much of the world. . . .

Since rezyning as NY state direktor of libraries 25 years ago my interest keeps up, but after 30 years on the firing lyn it has been joy to see from the syd lyns the marvelous program of this great modern librari movement & the larj fraktion of leadership by my old librari skool graduates & by my former aktiv co-worker associates.

"Decimal Classification This was my chief work in Amherst from 1873 to '76. . . . The Library Survey of 1926 found that this great laborsaver was used in 96% of public libraries & 89% of colej libraries. . . .

"Metric Since we started Metric Bureau in '76 international decimal measures gaind stedili til Japan & Russia recentli completed the list of 55 nations, the whol civilyzd world except Britain & Americ that shd have been at hed insted of tail of this reform. . . . Stidi work from our central ofis, 156 5th av., NY, promises erli succes.

"Speling Skolars agree that we hav the most unsyentifik, unskolarli, illojikal & wasteful speling ani languaj ever ataind. . . . old workers of '76 rejoice that all competent educators now admit this to be the most vital problem in universal education & in making simplifyd English the universal world languaj. LP Club has long been hedquarters for all 3 national societies for ridng English of its worst obstakls in overcumng illiterasi & becumng the world languaj.

"Literari labor savers In '76 my plan was sneerd at as 'Dewey's jimcraks.' Its first year sold a total of \$300. This grew to \$15,000,000 a year & then merjd with Remington typewriter & other similar concerns. Its growing beneficent servis has spred to most other nations. As founder of Librari Bureau in '76 my presidensi continued 25 years. . . . It has been parent of mani imitators but the world stil knows it as first to 'sel methods rather than merchandise.' My experience in Librari Bureau led to my elektion during war tym as president of both national efisiensi societies & also to making our Foundation's chief work Seedsowing including laborsavers.

Dewey then went on to summarize the utopian community he built and the objectives he had in mind:

"Lake Placid Club 53 years ago we began planning an ideal vacation home for thoz doing sum worthi work but needing nu helth & strength



to cari on efisientli. After 16 years serch for the veri best location we found Lake Placid 40 years ago. There in 1895 we started with onli \$500 cash & for peopl who believd in our unusual standards & ideals, what is now known as the leading famili coop-erativ club of the world.

"From 30 peopl in a rented house on 5 akers it grew to 412 bildings on 10,600 akers & from \$4800 total biznes the first year to over 3 milions anuali. Most peopl think of it as simpli a fyn summer & winter resort but in fakt that was my smallest interest. But it has grown so prominent that most peopl forgot its real object & carakter. . . .

"In 1922 my entyr voting stok was givn to found our LPC Education Foundation. Later everithing els I ownd made up initial endowment of a milion. My lyf work is thus just geting fairli started. Each year our members giv mor & mor to this Foundation which now owns the entyr group of corporations known as Lake Placid Club.

"Northwood, our Club boys skool, ia alredi the veri best.

"7 Lakes, our Florida branch Club Friends who had watcht our fenomenal Adirondak growth gave our Foundation 3000 akers on 7 Lakes which we had chosen after long studi & motoring 20,000 myls in the south, as best subtropic location in America for a famili club with our unusual ideals & methods. With other gifts this Florida branch endowment was estimated worth ultimатели a milion. The lejislatre chanjd the name of the best location on the famous Florida Rij to Lake Placid & gave with remarkabl powers of control a town charter for 50,000 akers on its 30 lakes.

"Here we ar hapili bui duplicating the parent Adirondak Club. . . . But I tel them my job is seedsowing, to plant & start helthi growth but not to wait to see mature trees.

"My wyf, Annie Godfrey, was always an equal partner. We began this Club vision at our mariaj in '78. Our beautiful granit chapel bilt as her memorial, resyts she was co-founder of the Club, 'serene, clear-eyed & unafraid.' For 44 years she left on the Club the impres of her practical wisdom, taste & unfaltering faith. We had always agreed that whichever went first the other shd cari on our plans. Her chief associate & closest frend, Emily Beal of Boston, came to us 15 years ago as vicepresident & jeneral manager. 7 years ago we marid & she also has stampt her personaliti on both parent Club & Florida branch of which she, 25 years yunger than I, is real hed as vicepresident & trezurer.

"I hav never graspt the thot that sum day I shd 'retyr.' I am neither just waiting for nor dreding the sumors. I tol my staf that perhaps I wil retyr at 100 thus giving me 20 mor years of activ work. Each day starts exaktli as if ther wer 20 mor years. My vigorus wyf is at the helm & is a skilful enjineer as well as steersman. . . .

"Godfrey, my onli child, now 44, has becum US leader in simpler speling. For 2 years he has givn praktikali all his tym as prime mover in geting the World Olympics at Lake Placid next Feb. 4-13 & is president of the Olympics committee. He is deepli interested in most of the work to which I hav givn my lyf. I believ he wil render valiant servis toward making this a betr world. . . .

"All thez 'cauzes' for which I hav workt for a lyftym stil ar 'my children' & I am justli proud of what they hav alredi dun & even mor am inspired by the clear vision vouchsafed me of their future. . . .

After a vivid description of his daily life in Florida and the beautiful environment Dewey finally stated his greatest ambition in life:

"my pet aunt used to tel me 60 years ago that her great ambition was to gro old beautifuli & she did. But mine is not to gro old at all in spirit & faith in the ultimate triumf of the best things. Melvil Dewey is not a watch that wears out to be discarded but lyk a sun dial wher no wheels get rusti or slip a cog or get tired & long for rest. I'l send another 5 year letr on my 85th. . . ."

Dewey never got the chance to send out another birthday letter because this old time machine finally became worn out the morning after Christmas. His last birthday letter shown above, therefore, stands as a summary of his life and work and those educational movements in which he had played a major role. In his own summary, however, he forgot to list the two library schools he had established, the seventeen years of educational work he did which resulted in modernizing the state legislation regarding education and the Board of Regents of New York State, the state library programs and adult education (university extension or, to use his own slogan "education at home for adults thru lyf"). In the postscript to the letter, nevertheless, he added with pride that "Columbia University anounst for the 1st Library Skool in the world which I started ther in 1887, that a founder's day meeting wd be held each Dec 10 hereafter," and "then came report of annual founder's day

at our Northwood skool with . . . their plejes to maintain our unusual standards. . . ."1

In reviewing Dewey's own assessment, one will find from beginning to end his sense of pride, and zealotry for education, mixed with an overwhelming passion for his "causes." And yet, he was humble enough to admit, at the end of his own summary, that after counting all the remarkable events,

. . . thez meni things reali seem to me not my own work, for 60 years ago I anounst dreams of doing varius important things for which my 1 lyf was not enuf. Insted of doing them myself my job was to inspyr others to do the real work so I cd thus raiz myself to the 2d power. If we cd develop 1 nu efisient worker yearli, in 50 years 50 jobs cd be done. So I hav always been indiferent as to who did the work or receivd the credit. From the 1st my whol concern was that sumone shd do it. I cared mereli for results.<sup>2</sup>

For those who do not know the man, such statements must sound pretentious, but the amazing truth is that when Dewey made up his mind to devote his life to education fifty-eight years ago, he said exactly that (see page 18). At eighty, Dewey had developed a lot more than eighty efficient workers, indisputably he had raised himself to the second power beyond his own expectation. Henry Barnard once told Dewey that "your intense earnestness and your power of work and of getting willing work out of others will be an inspiration all along the old lines of office work."<sup>3</sup> A New York lawyer also expressed the same opinion when he was asked by Dewey to assist him on university extension work.

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<sup>1</sup>Melvil Dewey, "80th birthday letr, 10 Dec 31, to a fu Personal frends," p. 10. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Barnard to Melvil Dewey, December 6, 1888. Melvil Dewey Papers.

He conceded to Dewey: "You are certainly an expert in exciting a man's ambition." (see Appendix M.) Godfrey Dewey once attested to this unique characteristic of his father in the following manner:

My father had a rare gift of inspiring intense and lasting loyalties on the part of his associates and co-workers and even among more casual contacts. . . . One trait . . . was his long-standing preference for working in the background as secretary of a movement or committee, or in no official position, rather than as president or chairman. Always he was glad to have the credit for any achievement go to anyone who might thereby be motivated to work more effectively for it; for his own motivation, it was sufficient to see that the desired result was achieved.<sup>4</sup>

The actual result which Dewey wanted to achieve was, undoubtedly, economy and efficiency in popular education. This he had said many times as evidenced in the chapters which have gone before. All of his reforms and educational contributions were derived from that fundamental objective. A note he wrote entitled "Credo" in the fall of 1931 is the ultimate manifesto of Dewey's educational thought and ideals:

Credo -- What 80 years' experience has taut me to believ.

Creed usuali means relijus belief but the 2d dictionari meaning is "that which is believd." From tym to tym I jot down here things which after long thot I hav come firmlI to believ.

1. A betr world cannot be attained by soldiers, police or mor lijislation. We must sumhow make peopl prefer, & voluntarili, the betr things; & this is education.

2. We ar spending vastli mor than ever befor & to mani peopl education has becum a fetish & almost a relijion. We ar getting great results but nothing lyk what we ot to get for the imens tym, muni & efort spent.

3. If a publik water suply is tainted, insted of bilding costli filters or adding protektiv chemikals we shd lst test everi stream that leads to our reservoir & prevent anithing injurius geting into our suply, i.e., work for prevention rather than cure of the difi-kulti.

4. Experts with long studi determind that the chief influence on the chyld's lyf wasn't the father nor the mother nor the teacher nor the preacher; but it was the reading. Most peopl confuse education with skools. The skool is usuali in youth for a limited

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<sup>4</sup>Godfrey Dewey, "Melvil Dewey," Library Journal 76 (December 1951): 1964-65.

cours when the pupil considers his skool as the main bizines of lyf. They speak of finishing skools & of completing education when they mean merely finishing the preliminary preparation with which to comence lyf which is the real education, & we hapili speak of the last day of skool as comencement. 50 years ago I sumd up my credo in the slogan "education at home for adults thru lyf."

Proceeding through his own rationalization, thus Dewey concluded:

We hav 5 typs of skools; elementari, secondari, colej, profesional & teknikal, & universiti. Ther ar also 5 typs of home education:

- a. Libraries; or reading books, magazines & papers.
- b. Museums; or seeing, including the education that comes without the intervention of an artificial languaj, but seeing.
- c. Studi clubs, or mutual help, . . .
- d. Extension teaching wher outsyd of the skools, . . . This includes evening, summer, vakation & corespondence skools, lektures, sermons & teaching in its broadest sense.
- e. Tests & credentials, the inteliktual yardstik which mezures progres & stimulates ambition to go forward.

Libraries ar the chief & central faktor of thoz 5 elements of home education.

Dewey then went on to explain his logic and practice:

5. Universal education by reading is praktikal only thru free publik libraries wher a traird librari staf can without cost giv to everi aplikant at least aproximateli the book that then & ther & to whom it will be most valuabl, either for information or for inspiration.

6. . . . each chyld that went from kindergarten to universiti thru our skools lost a year over the complexities & absurdities of compound numbers, & that this awful waste cd be cured by the complete adoption of the international metric weits & mezures.

. . . a greater waste [is] due to English speling, not alone in the speling classes, but reaching into everi other subjekt with constant runing to dictionaries, corekting exersyses & chiefli in adling the brains of children who naturali lern from analoji. . . .

It [is] clear therfor that universal education thru reading & libraries cd never do satisfaktori work til we removed the 2 chief obstakls. . . .

Therefore, Dewey concluded:

After 50 years of constant studi, work & wyd experience I believ mor firmlu each year that to remov thez 2 obstakls is the chief work befor American educators. . . .<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Credo" (typewritten). Melvil Dewey Papers.

From all of the foregoing evidence, it is clear that Dewey, a pragmatic and impatient man, became an educational reformer because he was dissatisfied with the conventional social, educational system. His firm conviction of the necessity of spelling reform, metric reform and improvement of library conditions led him to struggle throughout his life with these educational movements. In the area of library management and education for librarianship, Dewey's numerous achievements are obviously incomparable. His Decimal Classification, his library schools with thousands of capable students, his outstanding contributions toward the formation of the library associations, children's libraries, traveling libraries, school libraries, the library for the blind, the professional journals he established and the writings he published all contributed to the rapid development of libraries as a major educational force in the society. Most of these contributions have sustained the tests of social, educational changes and prevail in this country as well as in many other lands.

Incidentally, Dewey has been accused of being merely a technician. One author has said: "His Decimal Classification is, in a way, the greatest gadget of them all," and "his schools only provided systematic apprenticeship."<sup>6</sup> He adds: "In a sense, the 1923 Williamson Report on education for librarianship is . . . an indictment of the whole system of education Dewey bagen, . . . though Dewey created formal education for librarianship, he set it back fifty years."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>W. Boyd Rayward, "Melvil Dewey and Education for Librarianship," The Journal of Library History 3 (October 1968): 299.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 311.

In a retrospective, objective review of the validity of these accusations, one must realize that Dewey lived in an age when scientific discoveries and technical inventions were just beginning to bloom. In a way, the railroad and steamboats were also products of technicians. The mechanical mind of Dewey was a prime product of the age. Driven by a burning desire to improve public education, Dewey's objective in developing public libraries and training librarians was to serve the educational needs of the general public, not always scholarly research. A broadly based academic, professional library school was not called for, nor was it an original goal of Dewey. Structuring the early library school to meet the demands of today was not a major concern of Dewey, and probably could not be developed at that time. Even forty-four years after Dewey founded the library school at Columbia, Charles Williamson, then dean of the School of Library Service and director of libraries there, admitted to Dewey that "in our fundamental ideas and ideals of library service we have left very far behind the mark you set at Columbia nearly half a century ago."<sup>8</sup>

Agitated by the current women's liberation movement, American librarians are debating whether the low prestige and salary of librarians lies in the "feminization" of the profession; they suggest that Dewey's exploitation of women has resulted in today's lamentable conditions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Charles C. Williamson to Melvil Dewey, December 1, 1931. Melvil Dewey Papers.

<sup>9</sup>Dee Garrison, "The Tender Technicians: The Feminization of Public Librarianship, 1876-1905," Journal of Social History 6 (Winter 1973): 131-159; Jody Mewmyer, "The Image Problem of the Librarian: Femininity and Social Control," Journal of Library History 11 (January 1976): 44-67; and Margaret Myer and Mayra Scarborough, eds., Women in Librarianship: Melvil's Rib Symposium (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1975).

While it is true that Dewey preferred to hire women as library staff and admitted mostly women to his library schools (partly due to the fact that he enjoyed working with the opposite sex and partly due to his thrifty and shrewd nature), employment of women was one way to maximize the library's very limited financial resources at the time. At any rate, educational and career opportunities were extremely limited for an intelligent, ambitious woman in the nineteenth century. Apart from teaching in a crowded elementary school for a low salary, women who sought a rewarding career and independence in life were happy to find the door of the library and library school opened to them. Since Dewey opened the door of the all-male Columbia College to women in spite of repeated warnings from the trustees of the school, Winifred Edgerton, a library assistant, became the first woman to receive a degree from Columbia, "that of Doctor of Philosophy, in 1886."<sup>10</sup> Dewey tried and succeeded in many instances, more than any other of his contemporaries, to elevate the status and standards of librarians. Many women librarians became directors of libraries or library schools due to Dewey's insistence or recommendation.

Many articles were written by Dewey aiming to promote the salary or standards of librarians, library schools, and working conditions of libraries. Such titles are self-explanatory: "Steps in Developing Well-trained Librarians"; "Abuse of Name, Library School"; "Long Hours of Work"; "Salaries of Librarians";<sup>11</sup> "Rank of University Librarians";<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rider, Melvil Dewey, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> Melvil Dewey, "Library Notes," Public Libraries 8 (July 1903): 322-323.

<sup>12</sup> Melvil Dewey, "Rank of University Librarians," Public Libraries 4 (March 1899): 106.



"The Future of the Public Librarian";<sup>13</sup> "College Librarians";<sup>14</sup> "Library Schools of Doubtful Value";<sup>15</sup> and so forth.

While the social and academic status of women as well as librarians have yet to be improved, Dewey had done what he could under prevailing social and cultural conditions. It is unfortunate that due to some misunderstanding of Dewey's educational objective, and the time in which he strove to accomplish it, he suffered criticism for his efforts. One writer has said aptly:

In this day and age of standardized debunking, Dewey is a prime target (second only to library schools and he started all that mess) upon whom to pin all the evils of contemporary librarianship.<sup>16</sup>

English spelling reform was another educational, cultural movement so fanatically engaged in by Dewey but one which received so much ridicule, rebuff, and cost so much of his time, money and friendships. Spelling reform is now a dead issue, for the pendulum of educational trend has swung back and produced opposition to the work done by Dewey and his contemporaries. Even the twelve words adopted in 1898 by the NEA -- tho, thru, thoro, program, decalog, pedagog, altho, thruout, thorofare, catalog, demagog, and prolog -- are mostly forgotten by

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<sup>13</sup>Melvil Dewey, "The Future of the Public Librarian," Public Libraries 8 (July 1903): 327-328.

<sup>14</sup>Melvil Dewey, "College Librarians," Public Libraries 7 (May 1902): 192-193.

<sup>15</sup>Melvil Dewey, "Library Schools of Doubtful Value," Public Libraries 7 (March 1902): 119-120.

<sup>16</sup>Laurel A. Grotzinger, "Melvil Dewey," Journal of Library History 3 (October 1968): 313.

educators. Ironically, Dewey's radical spellings and his uncompromising efforts in the reform were often considered harmful to the movement rather than helpful to it. Supporters of the movement, such as William Torrey Harris and Andrew Carnegie, believed that such a reform must be slow, gradual and should have begun in the elementary school, for they thought that the major obstacle lay in the inertia and the prejudice of habit. The adult who has once learned the spelling in a certain way will always find it easier to go on in the beaten path, and to laugh at those who have not mastered the skill. Some supporters believe, however, that habit and vogue can be changed, and it is much easier to reform radically and quickly for it will be less confusing and painful in the process than doing it piecemeal.<sup>17</sup>

Since so many nations have successfully reformed or modified their written languages, simplification of spelling is not as radical or impossible as it may have seemed to be.

Even in the case of English, those who know the historical development of the language could find countless instances the people

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<sup>17</sup> Here the writer's own experience and knowledge in the study of languages perhaps will be worth mentioning. It is well known that in the People's Republic of China the government has quickly simplified the traditional Chinese ideographs to an amazing extent, and such language reform has been accepted and practiced successfully by a vast population. Since the Meiji Period, Japan had reformed its language drastically once, and the process is still going on. A similar case is Korean which has undergone periodic changes, but Korean culture and educational system have not been altered. In Turkey, one of Kemal Ataturk's favorable reforms was switching from the Arabic to the Roman alphabet, and it was achieved in a very short time. The Russians revised their Cyrillic spelling, the speakers of Portuguese and Norwegian go through several spelling revisions all without cultural revolution or educational crisis.

have actually improved on the orthographic practice of the King's English. Those who have read the reasons for reform as stated by linguistic authorities would come to support the movement, for the English spelling is neither phonetic nor ideographic. Even Samuel Johnson, who struggled for decades to put a premium on "correct" spelling, was himself torn by the conflicting elements of analogy, etymology, and various pronunciations. Little wonder that the "spelling bee" has become such a challenge for ordinary people, because English spelling is such a "split" for those who know more and a "spell" for those who know just a little.

Perhaps, Dewey's mistake was that he tried to link spelling reform with two largely unrelated problems of adoption of English as an international language and the preservation of world peace. Each of the three are worthy causes but when put together confusion and conflict results. In retrospect, it is a pity to say that, paradoxically, Melvil Dewey's mental fertility and physical activity were actually a handicap to his educational reform in this regard, because the harder he worked, the less he seemed to achieve! Anglic is now just a tongue of Babel.

Metric reform, again a movement "a century ahead of his time," took so much of Dewey's energy and time but again proved just an exercise in futility. Despite Dewey's persistence and persuasion, little was achieved during his life-time. Dewey was not alone, however, for John Quincy Adams, Thomas Jefferson and other leaders had tried before him. Many nations converted to the metric system after the death of Dewey, including the United Kingdom, but the United States remains an island in the sea of metrics. It is only now, a century after Dewey helped organize the American Metric Bureau, that the nation seems

willing to pay some attention to the problem of metric education. A national study, incidentally entitled A Metric America -- A Decision Whose Time Has Come, reported the following in 1971:

While the majority of the American people are not well versed in the metric system, the Study shows that those who are informed about it tend to favor it. This demonstrates a need for public education to help all citizens to cope with the trend to metric and poses a challenge to the Congress to point the way to all Americans.<sup>18</sup>

In 1975 the government reluctantly passed a Metric Act but set no time limit for a changeover. Schools across the country began teaching metrics to some degree, but the issue is so sensitive to industries and commerce, that Congress balked, in the Metric Act at making conversion mandatory. In March 21, 1978, an official Metric Board was confirmed by the U. S. Senate but with no budget, no office and no staff. The major charge of the thirteen member Metric Board was putting together "a national education program to explain to the average person just what the metric system is all about."<sup>19</sup> The militant soul of Melvil Dewey probably would like to join the Board because this is what he was doing exactly a full century ago!

Perhaps, this is a proper time to cite a powerful definition of education by a distant cousin of Melvil, that of John Dewey, who said in 1897:

Education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform . . . the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training

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<sup>18</sup>U.S. Department of Commerce, National Bureau of Standards, A Metric America -- A Decision Whose Time Has Come, N.B.S. Special Publication no. 345 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. xvii.

<sup>19</sup>"13 Metric Messiahs Inching Along," Chicago Tribune, 7 May 1978, sec. 4, p. 44.

of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life. . . . in this way the teacher always is the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true kingdom of God.<sup>20</sup>

A similar but much stronger statement was made by Melvil Dewey. He proclaimed in 1901 to educators gathering for the National Education Association in Detroit:

Civilized man has become as a god in what he dares and does, because he stands on the shoulders of all his predecessors and utilizes the work of millions of men in thousands of years.<sup>21</sup>

It seems to have been this "daregod," daredevil creed that urged Melvil Dewey to go forward, upward, to teach and to carry out perpetual social progress and reform. When he lived, he forgot himself, for his life was so wrapped up in educational reforms that he saw no excuse, no retreat and no obstacle in this world. With unshakable conviction, hard work and ingenuity, he succeeded in areas such as library associations, librarian's education, adult and extension education, state legislation and licensing, laborsaving and library organization methods. For all of these he was recognized by some people. Syracuse and Alfred University honored him with L.L.D. degrees; yet he failed so short in areas such as spelling reform, metric reform, and other unconventional movements that people accused him of being a "revolutionary," and criticized his "unfortunate predisposition to set up something different only because it is different."<sup>22</sup> But Melvil Dewey was never discouraged.

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<sup>20</sup> John Dewey, "Dewey's Creed," The School Journal 54 (1897): 78. Quoted in Lawrence Cremin, The Transformation of the School, p. 100.

<sup>21</sup> Melvil Dewey, "The Place of the Library in Education," NEA Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Fortieth Annual Meeting (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1901), p. 859.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Sarah K. Vann, "Melvil Dewey," Dictionary of American Library Biography, 1978 ed.

When he fell sick and thought that his fighting days were numbered, he had the following words addressed to his "associates in mani good cauzes":

If I must finish my life work now, I am very sori becauz for my fourth  $\frac{1}{4}$  centuri, I had pland so mani splendid things which I kno wd be of great servis.

But I am profoundli grateful that I hav had 75 years with so much of the supreme joy of hard work; so litl pain & so mani oppor- tunities to help make a betr world. The rich legacy I leav yu is the chance to cari to fruition thez movements we hav started. "Cari on -- Don't giv up the ship!" The ryt thing always succeeds in the end. I leav no definit instructions becauz I believ supremeli that yu will be gyded to the wizest solution of yur mani problems. I hop on the other syd I may kno how loyally yu cari on.

As I look bak over the long years, I can recall no one whom I ever intentionally wrongd or of whom I shd now ask forgivnes. Doutles, I hav made mani mistakes but according to my lyt, I hav tryd to do ryt and so if my race is run, I can go down into the last river serene, clear-eyed and unafraid.

God bles yu all & help yu to complete the good work in which I wanted to share longer.<sup>23</sup>

Many believe that much of that "good work" would never have been accomplished had it not been for the efforts of Melvil Dewey.

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<sup>23</sup>Melvil Dewey, "To my Associates in mani good cauzes," 3 February 1927. Melvil Dewey Papers.

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APPENDIX A

DANIEL COIT GILMAN TO MELVIL DEWEY, 23 NOVEMBER 1895

Rangoon Baptist College  
Rangoon, Burma

November 23, 1895

My Dear Mr. Dewey,

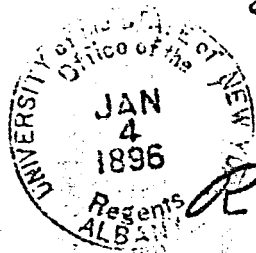
It has given me great pain to see, in some of the home papers, attacks made upon your good name. I am convinced they are utterly unjustifiable. Since I have left home, I have often thought of you, and always with feelings of the greatest respect and affection. I write now to extend my sympathy. I feel that I can sympathize with you, as during my residence in Rangoon our mission has been called on to suffer severely from calumny, abuse, and misconstruction. Those pages of our Bibles which contain the 37th Psalm were nearly worn out! May your issue from these trials be as speedy as I am sure it will be triumphant.

I am not without hopes that I shall have the pleasure of meeting you ere long, as I expect to return to America next March -- a step made necessary by failure of health.

I remain, my dear Mr. Dewey,

Your grateful pupil,

D. C. Gilman



U. S. N. Y.  
4 JAN 1896  
A. P. O. P.

Rangoon Baptist College,  
Rangoon, Burma,  
Nov. 23, 1895.

My dear Mr. Dewey,  
It has given me  
great pain to see, in  
some of the home papers,  
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am convinced that  
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I am not without hopes that I shall have the pleasure of meeting you ere long; as I expect to return.

to America next March - a step  
made necessary by failure of  
health.

I remain, my dear Mr. Dewey,

Yours gratefully  
D. C. S. Lane

D. C. S. Lane

APPENDIX B

FREDERICK AUGUSTUS PORTER BARNARD TO SETH LOW, 15 DECEMBER 1888

## Columbia College

New York

President's Room, *December 15th, 1888*

My dear Mr Low: Certain incidents of recent occurrence make it seem to me a duty to make a written record of my appreciation of the value of the work done here by Mr Dewey, as chief librarian of the college. To understand this it is necessary to refer to the low condition to which the library had sunk during the greater part of this century. The books, such as they were, were little used, and not appreciated by either students or officers; visitors to the library were few, and scarcely any one resorted to it for reading, in fact the librarian was disposed to discourage readers, and when I recommended students to resort there in their vacant hours he often complained to me that they annoyed him. Your own recollection will tell you that the library was practically of no use to you during your student life.

On the occurrence of a vacancy of the office, and when the library was about to be removed into the new building, the committee resolved to institute a reform. A member of the committee made a special visit to Boston and Cambridge for the sake of studying the Boston public library and the library of Harvard University. By consent of the committee I invited Mr Melvil Dewey, then director of the Library Bureau in Boston, and recent librarian of Amherst College, whom I had known for 10 years preceding, and whom I believe to be the most accomplished librarian in the country, to visit New York and to be present at a meeting of the committee. Mr Dewey accepted the invitation and was present with the committee on several occasions. He was so evidently a master of the subject, and proposed so many and so novel views in regard to library management, that he greatly impressed the minds of the members. It had not occurred to me to nominate him as our librarian here, for I knew he was engaged in a flourishing business in which he was much interested. The committee, however, manifested a strong desire that he should undertake for us the work which he evidently so well understood. He met their advances reluctantly, but proposed to look for a suitable person whom he could guarantee to fulfill their expectations. After much pressure, however, he consented that his name should be placed before the board. In doing so,

however, he was obliged to make considerable pecuniary sacrifices, to which he was willing to submit in consideration of the assurances given him by the committee, that they would give him hearty support in carrying out his views. One of these views was the creation of a School of Library Economy, a scheme which has since been realized with singular success. Mr Dewey was therefore nominated and elected in 1883, taking office at the same time at which the library was removed into the new building. His first task was to assemble together all the books belonging to the college scattered in the different departments and belonging to the literary societies, and make a complete catalogue of the whole in duplicate, by authors' names and their subjects. This was a heavy undertaking which occupied about three years before its completion. By a remarkable system of economy in the purchase of books, he made available the annual appropriation of funds for the rapid increase of the number of volumes, and by the interest awakened among friends of the library on the subject, he increased the number of volumes at a rate which in the last five years has increased the number three-fold. By the creation of a large reading room and the introduction of reading tables for 200 visitors at a time, and by the introduction of assistants to bring volumes on demand to all the readers at their places, and to assist in looking up authorities, he has encouraged the use of books to such an extent as to make the library a favorite place of resort for students and officers alike. This has done more than any other measure to encourage the spirit of investigation in our college and to make this system of University instruction a success.

It was also a part of Mr Dewey's plan to meet the entering classes every year at the beginning of the session in order to give them instruction in the use of books and the consultation of authorities, a plan which is pursued with excellent results.

But the principal service which Mr Dewey has rendered has been the inspiration which his fervent zeal and enthusiasm has infused into the whole body of students, whereby they have become warmly interested in the subjects which are taught in the classes, and stimulated to endeavor to produce something original of their own. In this respect his influence has been invaluable and has been of more important service to the college than that of any other officer.

Mr Dewey has been subject to some criticism for some certain



characteristics or acts which have not pleased certain members of the faculty. The criticisms have seemed to me generally mistaken or captious. The acts complained of have been owing to his excessive zeal or to his scrupulous observance of the rule. Previously to his coming here there had been no rule established for the government of the library. The first business of the committee was to establish a system of written rules, drawn from the experience of old libraries, which imposed some unaccustomed restraints upon persons using the books. Mr Dewey considered it his duty to enforce these rules impartially, and thus he has come in collision occasionally with officers who considered themselves above rule. But he has always strictly conformed to rule himself, and instead of being arbitrary, as has been imputed, he has never failed to refer every question of doubtful power to the committee or the president. For the past five years I have made it a habit to visit the library daily, usually spending there an hour at a time. Mr Dewey has been accustomed to make memoranda of all questions on which he desired advice, and these he had produced to me for my direction, noting my decisions, which he has usually preserved for reference. I am conversant therefore, with the details of his management to an extent which is true of no other officer, and I am very confident that he has not exceeded the bounds of his authority in any particular. His ardent enthusiasm, however, has caused him sometimes to be in advance of public opinion, and he has seemed therefore to be sometimes over positive. From newspaper notices it appears that Mr Dewey has been called to be state librarian and secretary to the regents of the University at Albany. It is not stated that he has accepted, but considering the past, I should not be surprised if he should do so. I have not seen him since the election, but several incidents lead me to believe that his place here is not agreeable to him. Should he leave us, I should esteem his loss a very serious one. It is not difficult to fill the vacancy by a man reputed to be competent, but I do not know where you will find a man whose whole soul is so entirely filled up with devotion to his profession. He has been a constant stimulus to intellectual effort in the college, and an inspiration which has reached to every member of the institution. If he leaves, his loss will be felt as a serious blow by even those who professed to be least satisfied with him here.

I address to you this letter as taking a special interest in the library and as chairman of a committee recently appointed to inquire and report on certain matters affecting Mr Dewey. I do not know any better form in which to express my testimony to the importance of the services rendered to the college by this excellent officer.

I am, very respectfully yours

F. A. P. Barnard

Hon. Seth Low

APPENDIX C

SETH LOW TO FREDERICK AUGUSTUS PORTER BARNARD, 18 DECEMBER 1888

Brooklyn, Dec. 18, 1888.

My Dear Dr. Barnard:

I have the pleasure to acknowledge receipt of your letter of Dec. 15th, concerning Mr. Dewey and the possibility of his accepting the position to which he has been recently elected in Albany. I cordially sympathize with your estimate of the value to the College of the work Mr. Dewey has done. I incline to feel, however, that in view of existing feeling it will be wise for Mr. Dewey to make the change. Whatever may be the cause, there is not the active sympathy between himself and the Trustees which is essential to the best work on the part of any official. I am sorry that it should be so, for, like yourself, I place so high a value on the positive side of Mr. Dewey's work that I am able to be less severe in my judgment of those things which have been the ground of criticism. Nevertheless, as things actually are, I incline to think that Mr. Dewey will do well if he turns to the new field.

Availing of this opportunity to express my best wishes for A Merry Christmas and A Happy New York, I am,

Sincerely yours,

[Seth Low]

251  
Brooklyn, Dec. 18, 1888.

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I have the pleasure to acknowledge receipt of your letter of Dec. 15th, concerning Mr. Dewey and the possibility of his accepting the position to which he has been recently elected in Albany. I cordially sympathize with your estimate of the value to the College of the work Mr. Dewey has done. I incline to feel, however, that in view of existing feeling it will be wise for Mr. Dewey to make the change. Whatever may be the cause, there is not the active sympathy between himself and the Trustees which is essential to the best work on the part of any official. I am sorry that it should be so, for, like yourself, I place so high a value on the positive side of Mr. Dewey's work that I am able to be less severe in my judgment of those things which have been the ground of criticism. Nevertheless, as things actually are, I incline to think that Mr. Dewey will do well if he turns to the new field.

Availing of this opportunity to express my best wishes for A Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Leth Low.

APPENDIX D

MELVIL DEWEY TO GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, 22 JANUARY 1892

University of the State  
of New York

G. W. Curtis, Chancellor  
A. J. Upson, Vice-Chancellor  
M. Dewey, Secretary and  
Director of State Library  
A. B. Watkins, Assistant  
Secretary

Regents' office, Albany, N.Y. 22 Ja'92

Confidential)

Dear Mr. Chancellor: I have just reached home from Chicago, where, after urgent invitation to look at the wonderful possibilities before the new university I have been spending three days with Pres. Harper. He and his committee of trustees who have the matter in charge, seem to have set their hearts upon my sharing in this work. In our first conference I had no suspicion of what he had in mind and discussed educational matters of course wholly from our standpoint. The case he made was so much beyond anything the public knows as to the Chicago work that I was compelled to recognize its claim for three days of my time. In brief, I find that the plans laid out, and the wonderful resources behind them, and the character of the men who have already engaged to cast their lot with the new university, make it clear beyond doubt that it is to be the most remarkable case of university building ever undertaken. I admitted that were I in any other place than this I should not hesitate a moment to accept their invitation to accept a place second only to that of Pres. Harper in nominal rank and salary, as well as in the all important matter of opportunity for usefulness. A considerable number of university professors recognized throughout the country as the leaders in their respective institutions, are going to Chicago this fall, where they are offered opportunities for doing everything that they are doing now and as much bet-

(Chancellor 2)

ter as longer experience and a perfectly clear field with necessary financial support makes possible. They recognize four parts of the new undertaking: 1, the university proper; 2, a great university library as the heart of the institution; 3, university extension, including not only university extension proper, correspondence schools, night colleges, but a complete examinations system like ours and all other agencies for higher education outside the ordinary class room work of the old institutions; 4, the university press, organized on broader lines including all that is done by the Oxford and Cambridge presses and much more. They propose a library school on the full plane of their other professional schools and with all rights and privileges connected with the other university departments. They wish me to take charge of the university extension and library, while Dr. Harper gives his closer personal attention to the university proper and the university press. They wish me also to be dean of the library school. They promise, and I am convinced are able to fulfil, all needed assistance and means for carrying out a magnificent work. You know my keen appreciation of the wonderful possibilities before this department if we can carry out the plans that are just fairly started, and you will understand that no slight cause could lead me to believe there was a still greater opportunity in an institution whose doors have not yet been opened while we date back 105 years. Their time is so short (as instruction begins October 1 next) that they are urgent for a decision, and the strongest pressure was brought to bear to get me

(Chancellor 3)

to sign some agreement while in Chicago. This I of course absolutely from the first refused to do, just as I refused Regent Reid when he urged me repeatedly to consent to some proposition for coming to Albany while I was absorbed in my Columbia work. I recognize fully the splendid support that nearly the entire board of regents have given me and the personal friendship so many of them have evinced. It nearly breaks my heart to think of leaving the work just on the threshold of its success after a struggle of three years in getting ready to accomplish our ideals. As in coming to Albany the question hinges wholly on where I can do the most good. Incidentally, it relieves some serious embarrassment resulting from my never having received here what Chancellor Pierson assured me before my decision that I should receive after the first year. With a debt of \$28,000 hanging over me I find after paying interest and life insurance to protect my creditors that I can get through the year only with the most rigid economy, leaving nothing to pay off the principal. The salary of \$7,000 in Chicago would enable me in 11 years to get out of debt, and I can not help giving this some weight.

I half consented yesterday to come, provided I could secure an honorable release from the regents. Their term opens October 1, and I could in the remaining nine months by special effort get things prepared for my successor, who perhaps could be appointed soon and take office while I could work with him for a time. I send a duplicate of this letter to Regents Fitch, Sexton, Warren, Beach and



(Chancellor 4)

Bestwick. Regent T. G. Smith dines with me to night and I will tell him. Regent Watson is abroad and Regent Townsend ill. They make up the executive committee. The Chicago trustees meet again Tuesday p.m. and I am to telegraph Tuesday morning. Of course I can not expect the members of the executive committee to appreciate the greatness of the opportunity offered at Chicago, but I can not telegraph an acceptance till I have your assurance that I may do so honorably, provided, of course, that so far as the regents may ask my help I will do everything in my power in completing and carrying out the plans for which I have been so largely responsible. I beg that each regent receiving this letter will write me so I may receive it in the first mail Tuesday, or if necessary telegraph early Tuesday morning if I may with his consent accept this call to a still larger field where I am promised opportunity for carrying out the best of our plans without any limitation of state boundaries.

Yours very truly

[Melvil Dewey]

University of the State of New York

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, Chancellor

ANSON J. URSON, Vice-Chancellor

MELVIL DEWEY, Secretary and Director of State Library

ALBERT B. WATKINS, Assistant Secretary

Departments

Dictated 5

In reply to yours of

EXECUTIVE

EXAMINATIONS

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

STATE LIBRARY

STATE MUSEUM

Regents' office, Albany, N. Y.

~~92 72'92~~

(Confidential)

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(Chancellor 3)

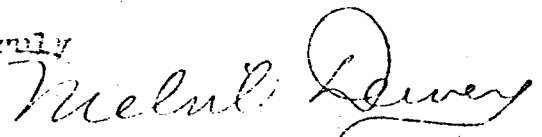
to sign some agreement while in Chicago. This I of course absolutely from the first refused to do, just as I refused Regent Reid when he urged me repeatedly to consent to some proposition for coming to Albany while I was absorbed in my Columbia work. I recognize fully the splendid support that nearly the entire board of regents have given me and the personal friendship so many of them have evinced. It nearly breaks my heart to think of leaving the work just on the threshold of its success after a struggle of three years in getting ready to accomplish our ideals. As in coming to Albany the question hinges wholly on where I can do the most good. Incidentally, it relieves some serious embarrassment resulting from my never having received here what Chancellor Pierson assured me before my decision that I should receive after the first year. With a debt of \$22,000 hanging over me I find after paying interest and life insurance to protect my creditors that I can get through the year only with the most rigid economy, leaving nothing to pay off the principal. The salary of \$7,000 in Chicago would enable me in 11 years to get out of debt, and I can not help giving this some weight.

<sup>In all</sup>  
I consented yesterday to come, provided I could secure an honorable release from the regents. Their term opens October 1, and I could in the remaining nine months by special effort get things prepared for my successor, who perhaps could be appointed soon and take office while I could work with him for a time. I send a duplicate of this letter to Regents Fitch, Norton, Warren, Beach and

(Chancellor 4)

Westwick. Regent T. G. Smith dines with me to night and I will  
tell him. Regent Watson is abroad and Regent Townsend ill. They  
make up the executive committee. The Chicago trustees meet again  
Tuesday p.m. and I am to telegraph Tuesday morning. Of course I  
can not expect the members of the executive committee to appreciate  
the greatness of the opportunity offered at Chicago, but I can not  
telegraph an acceptance till I have your assurance that I may do  
so honorably, provided, of course, that so far as the regents may  
ask my help I will do everything in my power in completing and car-  
rying out the plans for which I have been so largely responsible.  
I beg that each regent receiving this letter will write me so I  
may receive it in the first mail Tuesday, or if necessary telegraph  
early Tuesday morning if I may with his consent accept this call  
to a still larger field where I am promised opportunity for carry-  
ing out the best of our plans without any limitation of state bound-  
aries.

Yours very truly



APPENDIX E

MELVIL DEWEY TO PRESIDENTS OF COLLEGES AND PRINCIPALS  
OF ACADEMIES, APRIL 1896

University of the State  
of New York

A. J. Upson, Chancellor  
W. C. Doane, Vice-Chancellor  
M. Dewey, Secretary, also  
Director State Library

Regents office, Albany, N.Y.

The inclosed circulars will explain themselves. I feel a double interest in this important matter:

1 Because the American discussion and agitation of the subject really started in University convocation in 1866 and was kept up for five years. The leading American book on the subject, Barnard's Metric system, is simply an amplification of the paper presented before convocation by the president of Columbia college, on the formal request of the Columbia trustees, to counteract the impression made on convocation by a previous paper of a Columbia professor in opposition to the introduction of the metric system.

2. My greater interest, however, arises from the great gain that would accrue to education if we could save the time now consumed in the study of compound numbers. The experience of a score of other nations has shown that this can only be done by the enactment of such a law as has now been favorably reported in congress. Its provisions are less stringent than in most other countries, and yet will be sufficient to accomplish the purpose more in accordance with our free institutions. As bearing on this, I quote below a page from a circular letter issued almost 20 years ago by 26 of the most prominent American educators:

"Careful computation of the result of completely replacing the present weights and measures in our arithmetics by the metric, gives a saving of a full year in the school life of every child

educated. This startling statement has been repeatedly examined by practical teachers, who have, thus far, without exception, arrived at the same conclusion. When it is remembered that it is impossible to get time for various branches which it seems desirable to teach in the public schools, the vast importance of this saving will be apparent. It points to a possibility of giving some attention to subjects for which so strong arguments have been advanced but for which the most friendly school government has often found it impracticable to provide the time -- physiology, elementary science, industrial art, music, drawing. The proposed teaching of the international measures requires but a very limited time and will in the end save that time over and over again.

Besides the all-important saving of time, the metric measures should be introduced into the schools as one of the most perfect appliances known for teaching arithmetic to beginners. In the best school systems, it has been found of great advantage to teach a child our decimal arithmetic through tangible objects. The law of progression from lower to higher units, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, are all made object lessons by means of the metric measures of length and capacity. The metric square and cubic measures illustrate evolution and involution. Every teacher of experience, recognizing the exact correspondence of the tangible measures of the metric system with the numbers and laws of simple arithmetic, will see how valuable an aid is here afforded. Lessons impressed by seeing and handling the objects are known to be infinitely more enduring than mere statements, and the thorough teaching of the metric system is, therefore, urged as being an introduction of tangible arithmetic. The units, tens and hundreds of the actual measures are identical with those of the Arabic numbers; one is an abstraction, the other may be seen and felt.

As the metric multiples correspond perfectly with whole numbers, so the metric fractional units agree with what we term decimals. Decimals may be handled and seen, and the difficulties sometimes experienced in making younger pupils understand their laws will be largely obviated when these laws are made object-lessons through the decimal measures.

The committee has given only educational reasons for the step proposed, reasons which are seldom brought into prominence except by teachers. There has been no mention of the greater arguments, of economy in commercial and international relations, and the fact that the general adoption of the system by this country is recognized, even by its opponents, as one of the inevitable events of the future."

It is possible that the vote on the measure may be so close that a single extra vote in its favor will secure the immense advantages to your school of the complete adoption of the metric system. Our interest is of course educational, not commercial. Congress has



been very conservative in this matter and has waited 30 years since legalizing the system before it has seen fit to take this step which will leave only Russia and Great Britain, of all the civilized nations of the world, outside the users of the international measures. I am sure that the great majority of the presidents of our colleges and the principals of our academies will take pleasure in signing the inclosed petition and in securing the names of prominent citizens and forwarding it within the next three days to his congressman, or to any member of either house whom he may know better. It is a service to education that we ought all to be glad to render, but whatever is done must be done very promptly or it may be too late.

Melvil Dewey

ESTABLISHED 1784

University of the State of New York

Departments

ADMINISTRATIVE	EXAMINATION
EXTENSION	STATE LIBRARY
	STATE MUSEUM

ANSON JUDG URSON, Chancellor

WILLIAM CROSWELL DOANE, Vice-Chancellor

MELVIN DREW, Secretary, also Director State Library

*Regents office, Albany, N. Y.*

The inclosed circulars will explain themselves. I feel a double interest in this important matter:

1 Because the American discussion and agitation of the subject really started in University convocation in 1866 and was kept up for five years. The leading American book on the subject, Barnard's *Metric system*, is simply an amplification of the paper presented before convocation by the president of Columbia college, on the formal request of the Columbia trustees, to counteract the impression made on convocation by a previous paper of a Columbia professor in opposition to the introduction of the metric system.

2 My greater interest, however, arises from the great gain that would accrue to education if we could save the time now consumed in the study of compound numbers. The experience of a score of other nations has shown that this can only be done by the enactment of such a law as has now been favorably reported in congress. Its provisions are less stringent than in most other countries, and yet will be sufficient to accomplish the purpose more in accordance with our free institutions. As bearing on this, I quote below a page from a circular letter issued almost 20 years ago by 26 of the most prominent American educators:

"Careful computation of the result of completely replacing the present weights and measures in our arithmetics by the metric, gives a saving of a full year in the school life of every child educated. This startling statement has been repeatedly examined by practical teachers, who have, thus far, without exception, arrived at the same conclusion. When it is remembered that it is impossible to get time for various branches which it seems desirable to teach in the public schools, the vast importance of this saving will be apparent. It points to a possibility of giving some attention to subjects for which so strong arguments have been advanced but for which the most friendly school government has often found it impracticable to provide the time—physiology, elementary science, industrial art, music, drawing. The proposed teaching of the international measures requires but a very limited time and will in the end save that time over and over again.

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It is possible that the vote on the measure may be so close that a single extra vote in its favor will secure the immense advantages to your school of the complete adoption of the metric system. Our interest is of course educational, not commercial. Congress has been very conservative in this matter and has waited 30 years since legalizing the system before it has seen fit to take this step which will leave only Russia and Great Britain, of all the civilized nations of the world, outside the users of the international measures. I am sure that the great majority of the presidents of our colleges and the principals of our academies will take pleasure in signing the inclosed petition and in securing the names of prominent citizens and forwarding it within the next three days to his congressman, or to any member of either house whom he may know better. It is a service to education that we ought all to be glad to render, but whatever is done must be done very promptly or it may be too late.

MELVIL DEWEY

APPENDIX F

RUTHERFORD B. HAYES TO MELVIL DEWEY, 10 DECEMBER 1888

Fremont, Ohio  
10 Dec. 1888

Personal

My Dear Sir:

The New York authority will do a wise thing to appoint you. But you ought not to accept a salary less than that you now get. They should expect to pay you what you are getting, and no doubt when they come seriously to consider the question no objection will be raised. If they do object, it will be a sufficient indication that they do not fully appreciate the work you are doing and can do, so that you under their management would be hampered and perplexed with a lack of adequate support in your progressive work. With the salary perfectly adjusted, I would look for a readiness for enlightened and liberal views, and a satisfactory adjustment of other questions. Of course it will be hard to leave your present enviable place. But, with Mrs. Dewey concurring, and the other essential requirement assented to, I am inclined to the manifest bent of your mind, and to say yes.

With respect and regard

Sincerely

Rutherford B. Hayes

Mr. Melvil Dewey  
N. Y.

Dr. Geo. R. P. ...

Pittsford, Vt.

10 Dec. 1888

Response

My Dear Sir:

The New York authorities will do a wise thing to affront you. But you ought not to accept a salary less than that you now get. They should expect to pay you what you are getting, at no doubt when they come seriously to consider the question no objection will be made. If they do object, it will be a sufficient indication that they do not fully appreciate the work you are doing and can do, and that you under their management would be harassed and perplexed with a lack of adequate support in your progressive work. With the salary properly adjusted, I would look for a readiness for such kind additional views, and a satisfactory adjustment of other questions. Of course it will be hard to leave your present enviable place. But, with Mrs. B. Concurring,

and the other essential requirement essential to, I  
 am inclined to yield to the manifest bent  
 of your mind, and to say Yes.

With respectful regard

Wm. H. Hays

Wm. H. Hays  
 N.Y.

Rutherford B. Hayes

APPENDIX G

MELVIL DEWEY TO THE PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL  
SCHOOLS OF NEW YORK, 18 FEBRUARY 1898



## University of the State of New York

Regents office, Albany, N.Y., Feb. 18, 1898

To the professional and technical schools of New York:

You will see on p. 7177-79 of the report for 1897 mailed herewith, the interest I feel in building up the professional and technical schools of this state. I find in reviewing our relations to this work and in consultation with a half dozen people representing different schools, that there is in many cases a total misapprehension of our position. It will be clear to any one on a moment's thought that the interests of the regents in professional matters is on the educational side. The schools, not the practitioners, have been long subject to the visitation of the University, and it is only recently by the licensing laws that we have been given the more direct connection with the professions. While our interest is great in anything that raises these professional standards, it is of necessity subordinate to our original interest in the schools as a part of the educational system of the state. You will find in my reports for the last nine years the constant underlying purpose to make the schools of New York the best in the world, and more than once I have publicly stated that of all our schools the professional and technical were growing most rapidly in importance and most deserved our fostering care. The interests of the profession and of the schools that represent it ought to be identical if we look at these things broadly. If there were a diversity of interest so that a choice must be made between supporting the schools and

supporting the profession, our sympathies could always place us with the schools which are officially our own children, and for whose prosperity we have a much older responsibility.

But I believe if we have the facts properly before us that there is no occasion for choosing between the two interests which ought to work in the utmost harmony.

I am convinced that the time has come for several steps in the interests of these schools and am anxious to have a conference with their representatives to decide which if any of these steps shall be entered on at once. At the meeting of the executive committee this week, on my suggestion it was voted unanimously that the secretary invite delegates from the professional and technical schools interested to a conference on the best means for advancing their interests and notify them that the regents will be glad to cooperate in every practicable effort to that end. To this conference I shall submit the following propositions and if those present agree as to their wisdom we shall enter upon them at once.

- 1 We propose revising the rules on acceptance of equivalents so that students coming from other states who have taken a part of the high school course may have credit given for what has been done instead of being compelled to take examinations on the whole course. We have been giving this matter careful study and think that methods can be devised by which we can protect the school against incompetent students and at the same time protect candidates from out of the state from what some feel to be a hardship and from what nearly all of them dread, the taking of numerous examinations. We

propose also that the students who have been admitted to any registered college shall be accepted without examination, instead of requiring that they shall have spent one year in such college.

The obvious purpose of these changes is to interpret the existing law in the most liberal manner possible. The suggestion that the law requiring high school education as preliminary to various professional courses be repealed has been made but has been so vigorously opposed that there is really no chance that it could be carried. There are more than 600 high schools and academies in the state that recognize the injury that would be done to them by such a repeal, and they, together with the higher educational interests, would stoutly oppose such a change. The number of students remaining in the high schools long enough to complete the course since New York entered upon this plan of higher standards has made one of the most significant records in our educational history and has won the widest commendation from thoughtful students of education.

2 We propose to mail to the press, to every high school and academy in the United States and to such foreign schools as send any appreciable number of students to the United States for their professional education, a brief statement of the great advantages offered by the professional schools of New York to students of other states.

Besides the natural advantages of the state, its convenient location and the reputation and admirable equipment and facilities of its schools, New York is the only state in the Union which by law now excludes incompetent students from these schools.

If a school admits students who have had no adequate preliminary training as a basis for professional study, it inevitably keeps back those fitted for more rapid progress and more thorough work. We believe that this matter can be so stated and enforced as to impress on the public, and specially on teachers of high schools and academies throughout the country, the marked advantage to a boy who has a high school education of coming to New York for his professional training. Our attitude is warmly seconded by all the high schools and academies because it protects them in retaining their students till the completion of their course while under the system of other states the professional and technical schools constantly draw academic students away after one, two or three years. We shall have the active sympathy and cooperation of these high schools and academies throughout the country, and if the principal understands the fact he will surely be interested in advising his students strongly to attend schools where for the same time and money they are sure to get a better education. In advising what will be for the best interests of his pupils, he will advance at the same time the best interests of his own school and of the important type which it represents. We are confident that this plan properly carried out will result in bringing to New York two well prepared students who would not otherwise have come, for every poorly prepared student now lost because of our preliminary education requirement.

3 We are preparing a professional and technical bulletin described on page r180 of the 1897 report. Copies of this bulletin will be

supplied to all the schools.

4 The academies, the colleges and the libraries of the state have each a council of five as the recognized representatives of their interest. We propose that this conference agree on a similar council representing the professional and technical schools of the state so that there may be a body charged particularly with their interests, to which any matter may be submitted that is general in its bearing.

It will be obvious from the notes above that if we can confer, establish our council and settle on the details of the steps that need to be taken, and then systematically and persistently follow out our plan, we can contribute materially to the growth and prosperity of the professional and technical schools of this state. This office and the regents themselves can be relied on to do all in their power to further any wise steps looking to this end.

We shall be very glad of any suggestions whatever on the specific propositions above or on any phase of the matter under discussion.

Your attention is specially called to the discussion of diplomas and degrees, p. r152-56 in the accompanying report. At the bottom of p. r154 you will find the vote of the regents which clearly shows their disposition to protect every institution against embarrassment and to grant any needed extension of time.

Melvil Dewey  
Secretary

University of the State of New York

Department

ADMINISTRATIVE EXAMINATION EXTENSION  
STATE LIBRARY STATE MUSEUM

*Alb.*  
*W. Dewey*  
Regents office, Albany, N. Y., Feb. 18, 1898

*To the professional and technical schools of New York*

You will see on p. 1177-79 of the report for 1897 mailed herewith, the interest I feel in building up the professional and technical schools of this state. I find in reviewing our relations to this work and in consultation with a half dozen people representing different schools, that there is in many cases a total misapprehension of our position. It will be clear to any one on a moment's thought that the interests of the regents in professional matters is on the educational side. The schools, not the practitioners, have been long subject to the visitation of the University, and it is only recently by the licensing laws that we have been given the more direct connection with the professions. While our interest is great in anything that raises these professional standards, it is of necessity subordinate to our original interest in the schools as a part of the educational system of the state. You will find in my reports for the last nine years the constant underlying purpose to make the schools of New York the best in the world, and more than once I have publicly stated that of all our schools the professional and technical were growing most rapidly in importance and most deserved our fostering care. The interests of the profession and of the schools that represent it ought to be identical if we look at these things broadly. If there were a diversity of interest so that a choice must be made between supporting the schools and supporting the profession, our sympathies would always place us with the schools which are officially our own children, and for whose prosperity we have a much older responsibility.

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The obvious purpose of these changes is to interpret the existing law in the most liberal manner possible. The suggestion that the law requiring high school education as preliminary to various professional courses be repealed has been made but has been so vigorously opposed that there is really no chance that it could be carried. There are more than 600 high schools and academies in the state that recognize the injury that would be done to them by such a repeal, and they, together with the higher educational interests, would stoutly

oppose such a change. The number of students remaining in the high schools long enough to complete the course since New York entered upon this plan of higher standards has made one of the most significant records in our educational history and has won the widest commendation from thoughtful students of education.

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It will be obvious from the notes above that if we can confer, establish our council and settle on the details of the steps that need to be taken, and then systematically and persistently follow out our plan, we can contribute materially to the growth and prosperity of the professional and technical schools of this state. This office and the regents themselves can be relied on to do all in their power to further any wise steps looking to this end.

We shall be very glad of any suggestions whatever on the specific propositions above or on any phase of the matter under discussion.

Your attention is specially called to the discussion of diplomas and degrees, p. 1152-56 in the accompanying report. At the bottom of p. 1154 you will find the vote of the regents which clearly shows their disposition to protect every institution against embarrassment and to grant any needed extension of time.

MELVIL DEWEY  
*Secretary*

APPENDIX H

MELVIL DEWEY, "EXAMINATIONS"



## University of the State of New York

## Examinations

This department has grown with great rapidity. The first year it required 20,660 papers, last year it required nearly 400,000. A principal of 25 years experience said recently that these examinations had raised the grade of academies in this state 50% and put New York at the head of the states in this respect.

Under the new laws the department has to examine every intending student of law or medicine, endorse every medical diploma from outside the state and beginning this summer to examine in 7 subjects every physician admitted to practice.

Examinations are now given in nearly 100 subjects and in 331 different places in the state.

The schools demand that this work be done better than in the past and the regents have arranged to meet the objections while retaining the great advantages of the system. But this demands more labor and expense in preparing these 400,000 papers. With the most rigid economy it has cost 5062.96 for the first quarter of this year and the sum asked \$21250 is the lowest with which it seems possible to do the year's work.

## University of the State of New York

Department

ADMINISTRATIVE    EDUCATION    EXTENSION  
STATE LIBRARY    STATE MUSEUM*Examinations*

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APPENDIX I

MELVIL DEWEY TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 22 JUNE 1899

2 Ja '00

To his Excellency  
Theodore Roosevelt  
Governor of the state of New York

In accepting the appointment with which you honored me as a member of the commission on educational unification, it was distinctly understood that I was to serve as a private citizen, not in any sense as the representative of the regents, and that if the report agreed on by a majority of the commission did not accord with what my 11 years of experience led me to believe for the best interests of the state, I should be free to point out to you the reasons. Saturday afternoon I signed the report with the six other commissioners because of the desire of the minority that a report should not go out as the deliberate judgment of the commission because a majority favored it, but that the report in itself should clearly indicate that on many of its important features the commission were divided four to three. In attaching such signature, I stipulated with the commission that it should in no way debar me from sending the supplementary statement which I felt in duty bound to make. I feel the more free to do this because by my resignation, which took effect this morning, I have removed my personality absolutely from the question of educational unification, and because after making this statement it is my purpose to drop further discussion of the question and confine myself closely to my chosen field of home education and library work.

Omitting many minor details in which the majority of the commission declined to accept my views, it seems necessary to specify the following points in which its suggestions should be amended before they may, with due regard for the best interests of the state, be adopted.

The regents should elect not only the executive head, but also all directors of bureaus, and should fix all salaries above \$1200. The state requires at the head of each of its great departments of education the peer of any man in the country in that particular field. Such men are now at the head of important interests and very few, if any of them, can be induced to leave those positions unless they can receive the dignity and protection afforded by election and removal, not by any individual, but by a nonpartizan board. The executive would in fact select and nominate the men for all these positions and his judgment would probably invariably be followed by the regents, but he should have this power, not by statute, but because of the integrity and capacity with which he administers his trust and the confidence he has inspired in the board which honors him by intrusting all its work to his execution. For his sake also I believe it necessary that the statutory power of making high salaried appointments and fixing salaries should be vested in a board and not in an individual, who in proportion as his powers are autocratic will be subject to unjust criticism and annoyance.

I believe that the salary of \$10,000 should be reduced to \$7000. If the ideal man of the entire country could be secured for \$10,000, I should heartily favor it, but it is almost certain that no one of the great leaders who have been suggested for this position can be induced to accept it on the terms proposed. These men are receiving from \$10,000 to \$13,000 salary in their present positions. Most of them have in addition a finely equipped presidential house, their tenure is for life with a provision for retirement on half salary at about 65 years of age, and their positions are free from the danger of merely political overthrow. No such man is likely to accept the proposed position on the terms now offered, and unless the conditions can be materially changed we shall find ourselves in the dilemma of having a mandatory law designed to secure a great leader, but which in fact will compel the appointment of a second or third rate man at a salary much higher than would have been necessary to secure the best services obtainable under the proposed conditions.

I object to the commission's plan as needlessly extravagant in its plan of administration. There is now serious complaint of the extra cost to the taxpayers of two administrative departments for education in New York. But the commission's plan provides for no less than four. The field of education is exhaustively covered by the various bureaus each of which must of necessity attend to nearly everything in its own field. There remains only the supervision of these bureaus and certain items of general administration. But for this the suggestions appended to the report provide for no less than four distinct administrative offices: The regents office, the chancellor's office, the bureau of law and the bureau of administration and finance; each to be maintained with rooms, officers, clerks and other employes throughout the year. These four should be consolidated into a single office with a single set of salaried employes. This would require no officers or expenses distinct from those authorized and controlled by the regents in the administrative bureau.

The report ignores the world-wide distinction between elementary and secondary education by attaching the public high schools to the bureau of elementary education, and the endowed academies and secondary schools to the bureau of higher education, thus putting a premium on the very duplication of inspection, examination and supervision which it is the purpose of this commission to avoid. Every civilized country recognizes the essential differences between elementary and secondary education. At no point from the kindergarten to the university is the line more marked than here. The child is just beginning adolescence, the most important and plastic period of its life. It is beginning to trace cause and effect and to be no longer content with the mere inventories of information of the elementary school. The difference between secondary and higher education is less marked as is indicated by the common European practice of merging what corresponds to our college and high school courses in a single eight or nine year gymnasial course. The avowed purpose of some prominent advocates of the commission's classification is to segregate the endowed academies, private and incorporated schools so that they may be more easily killed and they are characterized

as a menace to our common school system. I profoundly believe in the public high school as the most important educational institution of modern times, but it is educational extremism run mad to suppose that the world will ever dispense with its endowed and private schools, which alone can do certain kinds of work that the public wishes to have done. I can not with good conscience refrain from protesting against any scheme which would either attack the existence and prosperity of these schools, or would ignore the essential difference between secondary and elementary education which is recognized by every man whose training and experience have entitled him to the name of educator.

Names are minor considerations, and were it not for the more important matters mentioned above would not be referred to here. But I believe the commission's decision at its first meeting should have been adhered to and that the department of education should have taken the name "University of the State of New York" in recognition of the constitutional provision. For the name of the executive officer I feel that the commission has chosen the poorest of the five suggested, viz, secretary, superintendent, commissioner, minister, chancellor. Hardly any new mind coming to the question would hesitate a moment after reading in leading dictionaries the definitions of these titles, to recognize secretary or superintendent as much better words for the functions to be performed than to take the title chancellor and give it a new meaning when it has been for 115 years used by the state in its proper meaning of an honorary head to the University.

I have felt keenly the gain that would come to the state from a complete unification of its educational interests on a basis that would secure harmony and good will from all concerned. There is another consideration at least ten-fold more important than this unification, and that is that education in this state should be kept absolutely free from the domination or interference of partizan politics. Both the University and the department of public instruction are today doing better work than ever before in their history, and receive and deserve greater confidence than ever before. The presumption in such a case is very strongly in favor of existing conditions. While there would very likely come certain improvements if the plan recommended by the majority of the commission should be adopted, I am forced to believe after mature deliberation that the danger of injury to our educational interests, if their plan should be adopted without material modification, is vastly greater than any possible good that may come from the improvements suggested.

I keenly regret that I differ from the majority of the commission with whom my relations have been so pleasant, but with your appointment, you asked me to give my honest judgment of what was best for the state. I have done so regardless of every departmental or personal consideration.

Respectfully submitted

Melvil Dewey

APPENDIX J

MELVIL DEWEY TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 2 JANUARY 1900

22 Je '99

Hon. Theodore Roosevelt  
Las Vegas, N. M.

Dear Gov. Roosevelt:

Parsons expected to see you before you went west, as did I, but you were dodging about the state with your many engagements whenever I tried to find you. We regret more than I can well express that the reunion makes it impossible for you to be here at convocation for the little speech of welcome which you conditionally promised last winter. We doubly regret it because just at this time the eyes of the state are turned toward you as the one man who can solve the educational snarl which comes from duplication and the need of unification and which has been the chief embarrassment to educational progress in this state for a whole 100 years. It is fitting with the new century that the new order should come in. Parsons' father died this morning and he has just left the office asking me to tell you that the president of the Associated Academic Principals of the state sent to them all the question of their willingness to support heartily your propositions as expressed to the newspaper men at the time of the last meeting. He reports that the answers coming in are practically unanimous, indicating clearly that if you choose to make this a leading item next year it is entirely within your power to have such a support that there can be no possible doubt of the issue. The demand is that the public school department shall be kept absolutely free from partizan politics, that the superintendent shall have a longer tenure and opportunity to do his work solely from the educational standpoint, and that the educational system of the state should be unified, thus doing away with friction and needless expense and making the way clear to unquestioned leadership in every department of education. There seems to be practically unanimous agreement that the easiest, simplest and surest way to bring this about is to have the superintendent elected by the regents, retaining practically his present statutory powers. The public school department should then be of course a part of the University of the State of New York just as the University of France, which was copied from the New York system, includes the primary schools as well as the higher. I think you understand that I have never for a moment had any desire to increase my personal field or powers in this matter, and that I am so anxious for the good that can come to the state only through unification, that if necessary I would willingly yield a part of the power now exercised. The superintendent with his powers defined by statute would have much larger powers than the secretary, and there would be no danger of friction or feeling of subordination, since the secretary of the University would have nothing to do with the administration of the common schools.



I write this letter to ask as the greatest service you can render, not being here in person, that you send a pretty full telegram to be read Monday evening in the senate chamber when Vice-Chancellor Doane and Regent Whitelaw Reid make the annual addresses. A strong telegram from you expressing your interest in education and regret that you could not be present, and summing up your attitude in favor of practical unification, would help wonderfully in giving courage to all honestly seeking the solution of this question. Nothing at our great meeting in Syracuse last December was so received by the audience and gave them so much pleasure as my announcement of the interest you had shown in the library by accepting the chairmanship. (By the way, I have a pigeon-hole full of accumulated business to go over with you as soon as you return for active work next fall).

The feeling that they had your sympathetic leadership would lead the sane, level-headed men both in the public school department and in the University to have confidence that a solution was at hand and they would work together to bring about the ideal. I just find by good chance a copy of Mr Farr's circular letter and inclose it. While personally I am more satisfied with the present regents, I am bound to admit that your propositions as stated here meet with very wide approval, and that those who would prefer the life tenure and the present board, are constrained to admit that public sympathies favor the change. I must concede also that the change has the effect of a material concession on the part of the regents, because of unification, and in that way does a service. Yet personally I should be glad if it were not necessary to introduce this feature. The essential thing is freedom from politics, unification and harmony. The White bill proposition to create a commissioner over all I believe to be a radical mistake at the present time. Sup't A. S. Draper, who was much the strongest man we ever had in the position, told me the other day in Illinois that he could not conceive of a man who understood thoroughly the details of these departments making such a suggestion; that the state demanded both in the superintendent and in the secretary men of first class caliber and experience who could not be had as mere subordinates, and that with competent men in those positions the so-called commissioner of education was a purely fifth wheel to the coach who could perform no useful function beyond the imagination that he would be a unifying force. I agree with Sup't Draper, who has thought of this matter for many years, that the regents themselves are entirely sufficient for such a unifying force, and that by dropping, for the present at least, the suggestion of a high salaried new commissioner we should avoid the grave criticism of creating needless high salaried offices. Leader Allds was in

my office for an hour this morning and assured me that the White bill could not possibly have been passed in the assembly because of the prejudice against this creation of a new high salaried officer. If we can make the beginning with freedom from politics, and unification, I am perfectly sure that Draper is right, and after all our discussion our people here are agreed on it that there would be no friction, no difficulty, and absolutely no need of introducing a third high salaried man.

May we not rely on having a good strong telegram from you before we adjourn Monday night? If anything delays this letter in reaching you, let us have the telegram even if later and we will read it before convocation adjourns Wednesday afternoon. Perhaps the best plan would be to send the telegram for Monday night and a letter which would reach here before adjournment which could be read and given to the press so that the state should understand how warmly you are interested in this question and how just is the position that you have taken. It was a great comfort to many people to find with all your zeal for practical improvements you had so profound a respect for the oldest institution of the state, the chief work of the greatest of New Yorkers. When Alexander Hamilton's method has worked for 115 years, new hands should not rashly set it aside.

Yours very truly

Melvil Dewey

APPENDIX K

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON TO MELVIL DEWEY, 16 MAY 1896

## TUSKEGEE NORMAL &amp; INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE

(Incorporated)

Tuskegee, Ala. May-16,-96

Mr. Melvil Dewey  
Albany,  
N.Y.

Dear Sir:-

Being of the opinion that if you knew more definitely of its far reaching effect you would like to help forward the work we are doing here in the South for the elevation of our race, I take the liberty to send the enclosed circular.

We have a large number of poor but worthy students who do all they can to help themselves by working out a part of their board and paying a part in cash, but the \$50. for tuition they are wholly unable to pay and we are compelled to ask friends to help or turn students away.

Yours truly,

Booker T. Washington

Princ.

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, Principal.

J. N. CALLOWAY, Business Agent.

WARREN LOGAN, Treasurer.

## Tuskegee Normal &amp; Industrial Institute.

(INCORPORATED)

For the Training of Colored Young Men and Women.

Tuskegee, Ala. May. 16, 96.

Mr. Melvil Dewey,  
Albany,  
N.Y.

Dear Sir:-

Being of the opinion that if you knew more definitely of its far-reaching effect you would like to help forward the work we are doing here in the South for the elevation of our race, I take the liberty to send the enclosed circular.

We have a large number of poor but able students who do all they can to help themselves by working out a part of their board and paying a part in cash, but the \$50. for text books they are wholly unable to pay and we are compelled to ask friends to help or turn the debts away.

Yours truly,

Booker T. Washington.

Cris.

APPENDIX L

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON TO MELVIL DEWEY, 27 APRIL 1897

## TUSKEGEE NORMAL AND INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE

(Incorporated)

Tuskegee, Ala. Apr. 27th, 1897

Hon. Melville Denney,

Albany, N.Y.

Dear sir: -

If you can see you way clear to help our school again this year we shall be very grateful. What you have done for us in the past we appreciate very highly and it has helped us to accomplish more good than we otherwise could have done.

Yours truly,

Booker T. Washington,

Principal

BUCKER T. WASHINGTON, PRINCIPAL

WARREN LOGAN, TREASURER

# Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute

(INCORPORATED)

For the Training of Colored Young Men and Women.

*Tuskegee, Ala. Apr. 27th, 1897.*

Hon. Melville Denney,  
Albany, N. Y.

U.S.  
15 MAY 1897  
Ans. 1897

Dear sir:-

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Yours truly,

*Bunker T. Washington*

Principal.

*Wm. L. ...*  
*UC. 002 - ?*



APPENDIX M

GEORGE W. VAN SICLEN TO MELVIL DEWEY, 8 APRIL 1898

GEORGE W. VAN SICLEN

Counsellor at Law

132 Nassau Street

New York, April 28th, 1898

Melvil Dewey, Esq.  
Albany, New York

My dear Sir,

You are certainly an expert in exciting a man's ambition. It was very kind of you to send me the report of "S.B.G."; it is a great stimulus.

I will add to the syllabus in the way in which you suggest in your kind letter of 21st., "so that the heads shall indicate not only the topic but in many cases what the law is."

I will try and lay broad and deep the foundation of the Law Department of the University of the State of New York. Perhaps you will call me its Dean. (I had the honor of being nominated by Judge Hooper C. Van Voorst for Dean of the Law Department of Cornell University; but I was too active in business then to follow it up).

I can supply the technical instruction on Practice also, if any class should desire it. But that will not be desired in a University Extension course.

I shall now soon send you the final "copy" for the Syllabus, (developed in accordance with your suggestion). If it were proper to tell me approximately how many copies of a Syllabus you print, it might be of service to me in calling upon publishers for a few books that ought to appear in the List of Authorities. I could place a large number of the Syllabus among my friends throughout the State, where they might aid "University Extension," if that be thought desirable.

I have dipped into that Bibliographia Universalis. It staggers me. I have read your pamphlet, explanatory of the decimal system of classification, and shall read it again. Then I shall probably get a new hat, size 7 1/2 instead of 7 3/8. I did think of dodging the mental labor on that decimal system; but I will tackle it.

You do too much work.

Yours Gratefully,

[Geo. W. Van Siclen]

P.S. I see by cover of your Decimal Classification that you are an Amherst man. That accounts for it all. Every Amherst man I meet has individual energy, and good motive: so much so, that a year ago I sent my son Matthew there for his prelims., and this year he enters. Keep your eye on Matthew. (Send me back his School reports).

(Handwritten on side of page)

Unless time is short I shall keep back suggestions for "Law" catalogue of Bibliographia Universalis until after my Syllabus, which may give suggestions.

*M. W. Van Siclen*

GEORGE W. VAN SICLEN,  
COUNSELLOR AT LAW,

MAIL ADDRESS:  
"VAN SICLEN-NEW YORK"

122 MADISON STREET.

New York, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1898

Melvil Deacy, Esq.,  
Albany, New York.

My dear Sir,

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*"Saw" catalogue of "Syllabus" which may give suggestions!*

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Michael M. Lee has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Rosemary V. Donatelli, Director  
Associate Professor, Foundations of Education, Loyola

Dr. John M. Wozniak  
Professor, Foundations of Education, and  
Dean, School of Education, Loyola

Dr. Gerald L. Gutek  
Professor, Foundations of Education, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 13, 1978  
Date

Rosemary V. Donatelli  
Director's Signature