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Introduction

Thirteen years ago W. Boyd Rayward noted that much of what had been written about Melvil Dewey was "hot with adulation." It focused on his genius, his extraordinariness, his indefatigability, his pertinacity, and his brilliance. This, Rayward asserted, expressed a partisan delight in the sheer fact "that what he did could be done at all." In an act of bravery, Rayward then proposed that Dewey be approached critically by abandoning "simple contemplation of the triumph that anything was done" in order "to consider what was done" [1, p. 297].

The years since have witnessed only the partial success of Rayward's call. Dewey, for the most part, remains the center of the modern library history universe, its progenitor, a modern demi-urge who created modern librarianship from formlessness and emptiness. This conclusion might be expected from Sarah K. Vann's sympathetic biographical sketch:

His classification, his innovative ideas on library services, his clearly articulated conception of library education, the work of the graduates of Columbia College and the New York State Library School, and his involvement in associational activities at the national, state, and local levels, remains impressive and influential. [2, p. 52]

But one finds the same tone even in Dee Garrison's Apostles of Culture. And Garrison cannot easily be placed in the chorus of applause and adulation:
More than any other single person, Dewey shaped the development of the public library in the United States, forcing it into the path he believed it should take. Almost alone he set the pattern for library education. His pean to professionalization not only affected the growth of librarianship but also influenced educational standardization in all the professions. [3, p.106]

And John P. Comaromi's effort recently to add even one other person to the picture of modern library beginnings somehow seems a strange juxtaposition:

From 1873 to 1906 he [Dewey] was to devise and construct almost single-handedly the forms and substance of librarianship (Charles Ammi Cutter providing the other hand on occasion). [4, p. 177]

If anything, the mere mention of some other person, even a Charles Ammi Cutter, seems out of place, something of a sop thrown in the direction of mere mortals.

The difficulty with all such conclusions is, of course, that they often do not effectively identify the actual cause-effect relationships that were in operation, especially between Dewey's ideas and goals and the developments that occurred. Instead, a great deal of weight is simply attributed to his "activity" or his "energy" or even the fact that because he pursued some activity such as helping to found an organization, his contribution may be thought of as the existence of the organization per se.

Dewey was not, of course, the only person involved in such foundings, nor was he the only contributor, the only policy- and decision-maker, nor the only one from whom important, even determinative, ideas arose. The American Library Association (ALA), for example, had its origins among a number of people. Dewey was not apparently the originator of the idea that a meeting of librarians should be held in conjunction with the educational exhibit at the approaching Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. That role may be safely attributed to Thomas H. Williams, librarian of the Minneapolis Athenaeum and a participant in the 1853 librarians' convention some two decades before. Williams suggested the idea to General John Eaton, Commissioner of Education, early in 1875 in connection with Eaton's effort to publish the 1876 Special Report (itself begun the previous October). Eaton pursued the idea with others and by the spring of 1876 it had already been a topic of conversation at least among Boston librarians [5, pp. 36-37; 6, pp. xxvi-xxvii, 7, p. 7]. They had done little about it, however, and it was at that point that Dewey stepped in to actually arouse interest in it and to pursue it. Dewey's role in the actual arrangements was very important. Cutter himself said at the close of the 1876 meeting:

I suppose of late years many persons had 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. [8, p. 139]

This certainly appears like the progenitor at work. But Cutter was being deferential. The fact is that an important portion of the correspondence that made the conference a success had been done by others, especially through Eaton's agency, the Bureau of Education. Cutter himself had brought the prestige of the Nation to the event. And it was through Cutter's efforts that Dewey himself was enabled at a very late date to add to the Special Report a description of his classification scheme that afterward aided in establishing its reputation. Cutter was deferring, perhaps, for the same reasons that others since that day have been deferential. It was simply very difficult to get beyond Dewey the person. Dewey was the prototype of the modern lobbyist, a dealer in favors and gratitude, and a master at calling in the green stamps owed him when he needed them, though not always successfully. When one is in the presence of such a person, it is not only difficult to be realistic, especially when that person has appeared to have increased your own worth, it is a convention in interpersonal relationships to offer praise in the spirit of the statement, "I am forever in your debt."

To say this does not at all diminish the reality of Dewey's presence in the entire process. But it does tempt the observer to dis-
place analysis with deference, and, therefore, to distort what really happened. Indeed, after observing Dewey at work in the founding of the ALA, one still must ask, What exactly was Dewey's role and what was the nature of his influence—not absolutely, as if influence could ever be viewed in absolute terms—but in comparison to the others who were also involved?

Any answer to a question such as this will obviously be many faceted. Some steps toward that end may be found in discussions of Dewey's interest in efficiency, in his shaping of library education as task-oriented training, and, in conjunction with the latter, in his portrayal of library work as principally a technical occupation [I]. The present paper will focus on a still broader conceptualization, that is, that Dewey's contribution to modern librarianship may be viewed as his expression of a corporate ideal in relationship to libraries.

The Corporate Ideal

The notion of a "corporate ideal" will easily prompt an image of giant, perhaps international, corporations, now often widely diversified over several industries. Policy and major decisions are set by boards of directors who are far removed from the daily operations of individual production facilities. Elaborate methods are followed for predicting production needs, pricing products, assigning wages and benefits. And now more than ever such corporations are deeply involved in public policy decisions, either through the processes of regulation or labor union interaction, or through involvement in legislative and executive assessments of the needs of the national economy in the midst of world economic crises.

Obviously, this modern version of corporations, of their governance, and of the role they play in society may not be appropriately applied to Dewey's late nineteenth-century world. What is applicable, however, is the premodern picture of corporate beginnings and growth, that time when the now modern corporate entity was being formulated. America entered the industrial era by the 1830s with New England cotton mills and the East India trade. But the true flavor of American industry and commercial expansion did not take place until after the 1850s with massive applications of steam power and the development of mining, manufacturing, railroads, and telegraphy. And, of course, each of these developments was subsequently "re-revolutionized" by the end of the century with the introduction of electric and then internal combustion power.

The development of American industry also brought with it the development of mass markets which in turn contributed to the rise of popular culture. From a commercial point of view, popular culture may be considered simply a mass market for popular and easily produced goods. And, with all of these developments came attendant social changes attached to urbanization, immigration, the rise of new wealth, the rise of nativism, and notable shifts in standards of personal and social behavior.

One may view industrial and commercial expansion in terms of the birth, life, transformation, and death of individual businesses. When seen this way, the role of individuals and groups of individuals, their circumstances, abilities, dreams, and wisdom are paramount. But one may also view industrial and commercial growth as an overall social phenomenon. When seen in this manner, such growth represents a societal response to needs for essential (and nonessential as wealth permits) goods and services. Both perspectives are interrelated, of course, the overall informing the particular, the particular representing the cutting edge or realities of the overall. More important, the overall view provides significant insights for understanding individual cases.

The most fundamental problem that industrial and commercial growth faced in an overall sense was size. The United States was by far the largest single land mass with the largest, most changing, and mobile population to undergo industrial and commercial change up to the late nineteenth century. This factor by itself fostered enormous needs and, as a reflection of those needs, an enormously fruitful climate for meeting those needs. Several decades later Calvin Coolidge was to make famous the saying that, "The chief business of the American people is business." But that reality was already evident within the first decade after the Civil War. Furthermore, by the same time, organizing the means to provide goods and services no longer involved an outlook limited to cottage industry or to the small family-run business, although small entrepreneurial businesses of that kind were also a part of the scene. Developments in railroading and in communications, com-
bined with the ever-present and enervating idea of the frontier, and sprinkled with a growing number of successful models such as Rockefeller, Pullman, and Carnegie, had pushed the limits of entrepreneurial dreams far beyond anything previously imagined.

At the same time, the very size and vibrancy of industrial and commercial expansion faced severe limitations in the methods by which that expansion might take place, either in a general sense or in relationship to individual enterprises. There were no textbooks that one could read to learn how to proceed, and in fact, few treatises of any kind on the topic existed. Furthermore, the only extant models were generally related to European industrialization and were frankly of small value in dealing with the immensely different situation in America. The models simply could not accommodate the problems of size in such matters as finance, accounting, operations management, marketing, communications, and legal definitions. Railroading in America, for example, had to deal not with hundreds of miles of roadbed, but with thousands, and not with a relatively tight and small managerial structure, but with hundreds of employees scattered over large areas [11, pp. 57-66]. Three recurring and critical problems faced by business in general were, in fact, undercapitalization, expansion at too rapid a pace, and the lack of adequate legislation. None of these limitations stopped attempts at establishing businesses, industries, and services. Their absence, instead, made the entire period one of immense experimentation in such matters as styles of management (from the personally run enterprises of Rockefeller and Carnegie to the involved structures of banking and railroads), theories of efficiency and work measurement (especially including the revolution brought about by the time and motion innovations of Frederick W. Taylor), and means of authority and control (including, of course, the rise of the modern trust).

Of even greater importance for the present study is that the entirety of the change taking place in American business—its bigness, its vibrancy of risk and effort, and its sense of experimentation to derive what would in the end be successful—became a hallmark of the times. Business organization became the model for organizing anything. Tackling any societal need meant doing it as business was discovering it should be done. One should make an effectual organization of such factors as funding, persons, the means of production and distribution, marketing and revenues, into one entire operation, one system of interrelationships. To do so would be to follow the corporate ideal.

It is the contention here that one useful way to interpret Dewey’s role in the rise of modern librarianship is to view it in terms of this corporate ideal. It was this ideal that appears over and over in the way Dewey spoke of libraries and in the way he approached them and library organization in general. It was his changing attempts to implement this ideal that brought about both some of the friction that appeared in his relationships with his contemporaries and his most serious failures. And it was at least aspects of this ideal that survived his actual involvement in library work. What follows is an attempt to trace Dewey’s pursuit of a corporate ideal for libraries during the initial period of ALA development, from 1876 to 1881. In order, it will cover a comparison of initial attitudes concerning the value of library organization, Dewey’s own version of library organization, and how his version of organization developed and eventually fared.

Views of the Impending 1876 Library Convention

Dewey was no stranger to Boston when he arrived in April 1876, nor were the leading librarians of Boston unaware of him. He had previously toured the principal libraries there and had subsequently corresponded with the librarians of some of them. He had even been touted in Publishers Weekly as a promising librarian. When he did arrive, he immediately sought out Charles Cutter and others and in the course of the ensuing weeks helped to arrange for the initial meeting of the Association and the beginning of Library Journal [2, pp. 30-33; 7, pp. 7-10]. One may rightly ask, however, what were the specific ideas and concepts behind the journal and convention that Dewey had to offer the librarians with whom he worked? Just as important, what were the significant differences, if any, between his ideas and those of others concerning these same matters?

One source of information on the views of persons other than Dewey is the 1876 Special Report itself. In a most remarkable way, that Report represented the combined views of many librarians and persons sympathetic to the establishment of libraries in
the United States. Work on the Report was started even earlier than work on the Philadelphia convention, of course, but because it was published in connection with that October meeting, it included some awareness of the potential of the meeting. Furthermore, it offers a striking view of non-Dewey attitudes because, apart from the late inclusion of a prospectus for the journal and of a description of his classification scheme, Dewey had nothing to do with its preparation [5].

The Report itself manifested a cohesive approach to library development because of the way that General Eaton encouraged the writers to reflect a common view. That common view consisted of two specially important aspects. First, libraries were a public good because they functioned as “auxiliaries to public education” [6, p. xxvii]. They were, in other words, aids in a common effort to bring mental and moral cultivation to the masses. This purpose resounds thoroughly from nearly every part of the report [5]. Second, because librarians occupied what amounted to a newly important social position, it was necessary that “the scientific scope and value of [their] office be recognized and estimated in a becoming manner” [6, p. xxiii]. The latter required the study of library methods, a library science, of a sort Eaton was found admirably discussed by F. Rullmann, librarian of the University of Freiburg, whose remarks on the topic he included in the Report [6, pp. xxiii-xxvii]. Eaton was also enthusiastic about the impending library convention in Philadelphia. After reminding readers of the 1853 convention, he suggested of the convention to be held in 1876 that it seems proper and expedient that librarians and others interested in the welfare of libraries should again meet to interchange views, compare methods and the results of experience, and discuss practical questions. [6, p.xxiv]

Of the establishment of a library periodical, he noted its value as a medium for “the discussion of practical questions relating to the management of public libraries, and the dissemination of information regarding them.” He also included the prospectus of the new journal in which Dewey noted that the journal would form “a periodical supplement” to the Special Report [6, pp. xxvii, xxix].

Another source of information about the views of librarians contemporary with Dewey concerning the value of a convention of librarians was the notice that Cutter placed in the Nation in July 1876. Besides stressing the cultural purpose of libraries as “companion educators to the public schools,” Cutter noted that a meeting of librarians was appropriate for the recognition that it would bring to librarians as a profession. As to the practical benefit of the meetings themselves, Cutter was considerably less sanguine, suggesting that a convention might “not produce any very startling results.” But, he concluded, “good-fellowship is likely to be promoted and esprit de corps increased.” And almost as an afterthought he also suggested that the conference would provide an opportunity for librarians “to tell their methods” so that “others will be moved to imitate them” [15, p. 123].

These two sources of contemporary views suggest that although the cultural role of libraries and librarians was established, a better understanding of that role and of the importance of librarians in accomplishing it was needed. In addition, librarians also had need of instruction in practical library procedures, especially those related to bibliography and management. A convention of librarians would be valuable as a means for promoting professional status, as a personal encouragement to those librarians who attended, and, along with a journal devoted to library interests, as a forum for exchanging information about library procedures.

Dewey’s rationalizations of a library convention and of a library periodical were both similar to and strikingly different from those just described. He agreed, for example, with the cultural role of libraries and of librarians and, therefore, with the need for general recognition of librarianship as a profession. In fact, he reiterated the need for professional recognition in one of his editorials early in 1877 in the form of an anonymous but poignant quotation of someone he described as “one of the oldest living librarians”:

Through all coming time 1876 will be looked upon as the most eventful year in the history of libraries—the year in which the librarian fairly claimed and received at the hands of the public his place among the recognized professions. [16, pp. 245-56]

But Dewey differed from his contemporaries radically in how he set priorities. For Dewey, the cultural goal of libraries was not an issue. It was more like a self-evident proposition that did not
need to be amplified. Instead, the single greatest priority was to develop the means to achieve the cultural goal. Making the means to the end the first priority in turn had a striking effect on the way Dewey talked about libraries. First, the proportion of time and effort that he devoted to means as opposed to the end in view was virtually opposite to that of his contemporaries. He expended most of his time and effort discussing and promoting means. This was expedient, of course. It simply was not necessary to repeat what was already understood and accepted. This is likely also the reason why one finds comparatively little in Dewey’s writings on the purpose of libraries. Such comments were present, but regularly relegated by him to preliminary remarks or general truisms. The fact that he treated the fundamental purpose so cursorily should not be misunderstood to mean, however, that he did not concur with it.

Second, Dewey’s approach to library matters, especially the convention and the journal, differed in terms of its fervency. Other librarians had a more or less casual attitude toward implementing the goal. One might conclude, in fact, that they really had no explicit plans for going about it. In contrast, Dewey approached implementation as a critical issue. So important was it that his statements concerning it were everywhere phrased as injunctions—imperatives preached with inordinate enthusiasm and great persuasion. Furthermore, he described implementation in a highly specific way, covering not only the actual devices and techniques necessary for the operations of individual libraries, but also the organizational structure for obtaining the general acceptance of the devices and techniques. His imperative and specific emphasis on the mechanics involved had the effect of offering to librarians who seemed not to know how to get moving a way to achieve their goal. It was as if in response to the chorus, “Let us cause libraries to fulfill their cultural destiny,” Dewey answered with the refrain, “I’ll show you how! I’ll lead you.” Dewey’s willingness to show how to accomplish the task and to take the lead in doing so appears to be what was overwhelmingly appreciated by his contemporaries. At the same time, his emphasis on the means of achieving the end was so overpowering that it became an end in itself.

The Means for Achieving Library Advancement

Dewey provided the details of his means for achieving library advancement for the most part between January and May 1877. The most fundamental aspect of his plan was the view of the library it contained. Dewey obviously recognized along with everyone else not only that there were hundreds of individual libraries, but also that more were being established all the time. “There was a time,” he wrote in the first issue of the Library Journal, when libraries were opened only at intervals, and visitors came occasionally, as they come sometimes to a deserted castle or a haunted house. Now many of our libraries are as accessible as our post-offices, and the number of new libraries founded has been so great that in an ordinary town we no longer ask, “Have you a library?” but “Where is your library?” as we might ask where is your school-house, or your post-office, or your church? [17]

But, except perhaps in conversation with a librarian about his or her particular library, Dewey rarely spoke in terms of any individual library. Instead, he immediately generalized from particular cases either to the more general conception of “the library” (as in the ideal library or the library that should be well organized) or to the general conception of “all libraries” or the “system of libraries” (as in libraries seen in the aggregate as a corporate entity). Concomitantly, Dewey spoke of librarians as members of a single corporate whole, the profession of librarianship.

Now, speaking of librarians as a corporate whole and speaking of the need to organize systematically a particular library was not foreign to the thinking of Dewey’s librarian contemporaries. The views of Cutter and Eaton already mentioned suggest that. And in an editorial that appeared in the issue of Library Journal that included the Philadelphia proceedings, Dewey gave due recognition to the same idea:

Of all who came, there was not one who had not felt that he or she belonged to a philanthropic profession, and who had not recognized that the difficult and delicate art of library management rested on a science whose principles must be reached by continuous and careful observation. [18]
It was uncommon, however, to speak of libraries being alike because they were internally organized in a similar manner or because they were, in some fashion, elements of a corporate whole that included all libraries in the aggregate. In fact, to speak that way must have appeared somewhat odd to librarians whose workaday worlds were tied to the highly individualized exigencies of their own library institutions—to the peculiarities of their own trustees, to their own devices to cope with bibliographic organization, and to their own solutions of management problems. The fact is that prior to 1876, outside of perhaps the general ideals of public library goals and of the general organizational structure of libraries (boards of trustees, committees for administration, librarian caretakers), there was no area of librarianship that had gained any kind of widespread uniformity or standardization. The closest thing to it was cataloguing. That was principally because it had become common after 1850 to print catalogues, and printed catalogues supplied easily viewed models of procedure and precedence. But even there, variations suggest that for the most part each librarian did that which suited his or her own situation.9

That Dewey spoke of libraries as being alike was not, therefore, altogether consonant with reality. Of course, Dewey’s perception was in many respects shaped by his own situation. Once he left Amherst, he was no longer tied to any particular library. This gave him both the time and the freedom to emphasize what he apparently had already begun to recognize while at Amherst, namely, that libraries and librarians had more in common than they had in the way of differences. His understanding of the likenesses between libraries was not limited to ideals, goals, and a sense of mission, however. It focused directly on the chief procedures employed by librarians, such as cataloguing, shelf arrangement, selection methods, and book buying methods. Even more important, it included the supplies and devices that were used in libraries, such as “catalogue cards, call slips, special blank books, notices, borrowers' cards, placards (many apply equally to all libraries), ledgers, slip boxes, devices for holding books upright, library trundles, steps, indicators, check boxes, etc., etc.” [16, p. 247].

Now, to librarians in 1981 this sort of grocery listing might seem superfluous, what with Gaylord, Bro-Dart, Highsmith, the Library

Bureau, Faxon’s, Ebsco, Baker and Taylor, Choice, Booklist, as well as OCLC, RLIN, WLN, and a host of other agencies and devices as near as one’s telephone, mail service, or computer terminal, all dedicated to helping the librarian manage the store, so to speak. But this was 1876. There were no such agencies or devices or means at a librarian’s disposal. For check-out slips, bookends, bookcart, or whatever, the best one might do was, as Dewey suggested, to employ a local “stationer, carpenter, or jack-of-all-trades” for “an occasional job of ‘puttering up something for the library’ ” [16, p. 247].

Despite the fact that libraries were not really managed alike, Dewey concluded they had that potential. In fact, it was the potential of the idea that drove him. He was adamant in his belief that making libraries uniform in their devices and methods was both critically important and possible. Uniformity was important chiefly because of economic factors involved. For librarians to make their own library tools and to devise their own procedures was plainly “wasteful and unsatisfactory.” It amounted to an “extravagance” based on “doing things by ones” [16, pp. 247, 248]. The waste it involved was reflected, in turn, in what was available for book expenditures, the main implement for achieving the library’s purpose:

Many will be astonished to find how often it costs more for salaries and other expenses than for the books themselves. The present movement has as its corner-stone the economizing of these other expenses. Cataloguing, indexing, and the score of things which admit it, are to be done once for all the libraries, at a vast reduction to each institution, while the quality of the work will be improved. The result of the successful progress of this effort will be to secure better administration with smaller expenditures, and a much larger per cent of the income is therefore made available for books. [19]4

Achieving uniformity was also important for another, although less forceful reason, chiefly, that uniformity would help recent recruits to the profession learn the very best methods available. Dewey wrote that “a series of standard supplies would assist a young librarian very materially in adopting the best methods, besides tending largely to secure uniformity in other matters” [16, p. 247]. At this point in his career, however, he did not put too
much stock in this reason. It was useful as an argument but not nearly as cogent as the economics of the situation. Dewey summarized both arguments forcefully:

The problem before us is briefly this: to make libraries better—their expenses less. If the average voter cannot be made to understand the importance of improvement, he is very susceptible to arguments in favor of economy, and the proposed work receives the most cordial endorsement of practical men. [16, p. 246]

Regardless of the reason employed, however, the end was the same—uniformity. Only after that goal had been reached would librarians “be ready to grapple directly with the main problem—the education of the masses through the libraries, by securing the best reading for the largest number at the least expense” [16, p. 247].

Dewey’s arguments could only have brought applause from his librarian contemporaries, especially considering the temper of the times. To improve anything meant doing it uniformly and systematically. It also meant being practical. Here indeed was a dollars-and-cents man, one who spoke the language of hard realities, one who did in fact see the library movement in a perspective designed at once to aid it and to bring it “the cordial endorsement of practical men”—that is, men of business. And nothing would improve the status of librarians so much as their recognition by that segment of society.

The chief problem was, of course, to convert the goal to reality, to get the job done. Here as well Dewey was not lacking for a solution. His solution to the problem was organization, or, “organized co-operation.” By cooperation Dewey did not mean simply assembling a group of librarians together to talk over their methods in some casual way, in the manner, for example, that Cutter and Eaton had suggested. In fact, he did not mean simply making an organization of librarians per se, although that was involved. Dewey’s editorial in Library Journal, January 1877, just three months after the convention in Philadelphia, spoke directly against that less than rigorous approach to organization:

The first great need is undoubtedly the proper organization, simple but thorough, of American library interests, so that the objects and methods of the Association can be presented to librarians with invitations to become members. It should be understood that such organization is not simply intercourse with one another, but is a great labor-saving necessity; an economizer of time and money; a desideratum alike for library and librarian. Without such organization experience has sufficiently proved that Poole’s Index will remain uncompleted; that each cataloguer will work alone and unaided on his copy of each book without utilizing to any proper extent the labors of his fellows; that the folly will be continued of hunting and recording meaningless signatures instead of sizes; in short, that but a fraction of the work which ought to be accomplished can be satisfactorily done. Individuals have neither authority nor ability to carry forward the needed work. It must be done by the co-operation of those most interested—the libraries. [20]

Now, on the face of it, one may wonder how Dewey’s call for cooperation and organization meant anything different than getting librarians to agree on the best ways of doing their work and, perhaps still further, to contribute certain amounts of time and labor to design a system or to help one another. The answer lies in what Dewey called “the proper organization . . . of American library interests.” First of all, it should be noted that the term “organization” in this phrase does not refer to the organization, the ALA, but rather to the act of organizing. Second, the object of organizing, that is, “library interests,” was a conception far broader than libraries or even librarians considered alone. It was, instead, an economic conception, not unlike the assessment of a sizable market with its various interrelated elements: consumers, middlemen, manufacturers, cost accounting, marketing, research and development, and management structure. Library readers were the ultimate consumers, of course. But between them and books stood the library, the outlet or retail store. The best way to provide efficient work at the outlet end of the system was to manage the outlets in an efficient manner. But that depended in turn upon management methods and supplies (supplies meaning items used to operate the outlet, not books supplied to readers). Seen from
still another perspective, the libraries themselves also constituted something of a market. Their need for supplies, for organizing ideas and systems, and for methods, required that their librarian-managers either devise such systems or supplies by themselves or buy them. If the latter, it meant buying locally because there were no national manufacturers of library supplies and devices.

In Dewey's view, one key to managing the outlets in an efficient manner was to convince librarians to follow uniform methods and to use uniform supplies:

The possibility of labor-saving in cataloguing and money-saving in supplies is conditional upon the degree of uniformity in methods and appliances. If no two libraries use the same size catalogue card, it will be difficult to devise any system of co-operative cataloguing applicable to all alike, and it will be wholly impossible to make the cards by the hundred thousand and thus reduce their cost one half. There are several hundred different blanks and appliances already sent in as contributions to the Bibliothecal Museum. Many of these are of exceeding convenience, and help materially in the satisfactory and economical administration of both large and small libraries. If they could be obtained of the most approved patterns and at the lowest possible cost, it would be desirable to use them in many places where it is not desirable for the librarian to spend the amount of money and time necessary to devise and superintend the making of the few that he himself needs. [16, p. 246]

But convincing librarians to cooperate in this fashion was only half the job of organizing. Since there were no manufacturers of supplies or basic uniform bibliographic systems, the other half of the task was to organize the production of supplies and also the needed bibliographic tools. Now, organizing supplies and tools in turn had more than one facet. There had to be a source of ideas for such things. Dewey noted, in this respect, that the rise of interest in libraries had resulted in "a large number of new ideas and suggestions from those experienced, and from those little versed, in the technicalities of library work" [16, p. 246]. Practitioners were, in effect, the best source for ideas about the supplies needed, although it was understood that not all such ideas were of equal merit. It was important, therefore, to organize the source of ideas, librarians, not only in order to obtain the best, but to place that source of ideas into an effective relationship with the provision of supplies.

The way the latter was to be done was through the ALA itself, the professional association. Dewey wrote, "It is no small part of the work of the Association to control this interest and to guide it into profitable channels" [16, p. 246]. Product development was, of course, not the only purpose of the Association, but it was in Dewey's view the most pressing and immediate purpose:

For a time much attention must be given to details, and only a librarian appreciates the importance of library details. Most of these, once fairly settled, will require little, if any, more attention, and, when fairly out of the way, the Association will have opportunity to attempt that work which to the public will seem more important and profitable. But we cannot build the house until we have made the bricks, for they are not ready to our hands. [16, p. 246]

The other "more important" work in the eye of the public was, of course, the education and cultivation that was the ultimate purpose of libraries.

Having concluded that the ALA was to play a central role in organizing the ideas that would lead to appropriate supplies and techniques, Dewey had to face still another facet of the overall business of organizing. Once having come up with various ideas for supplies and tools, these had to be converted into the most usable products. Here too, the Association was to be instrumental:

A competent committee on supplies could do some exceedingly valuable work for the Association by carefully comparing the great variety in use, selecting the best models for all needed purposes, reporting them as standards, and then securing, as could easily be done, their manufacture in large quantities, so that they could be distributed to all libraries desiring, at a much lower price than they could otherwise be obtained.

The Supply Committee, if it do vigorous work, can effect a substantial saving in money and patience to all the profes-
Inherent in actual practice was the usable products and contract for the future between the librarian and library on the one hand and needed had a dual capacity in this position: to reduce ideas and suggestions production of and supervise the sale of such supplies. It would process was obviously no casual affair if the breadth of its scope means anything. In fact, its very seriousness required Dewey to deal with concomitant issues of fundamental importance. First, because the entire organizing process was at its core an economic matter, a business proposition, Dewey had to explain its nature as a market both to the Association and to the wider business world:

The proposed saving should not be confounded with co-operation in the ordinary sense, which is simply a device for reducing the cost of getting articles from producer to consumer without paying too much to middlemen. Library supplies are hardly any of them in the ordinary market, but are things made to special order. . . . But heretofore, it has been as practicable to make the supplies in quantity for all the libraries as it would have been to make the false teeth for an entire commonwealth from a single mould. Every thing had to be fitted to its special destination. While the field is not large enough to bring in capital and competition so that what is wanted can be secured, like the necessities of life, at a simple living profit above cost, the field is altogether too large to continue the wasteful and unsatisfactory system of each entirely for himself. [16, p. 247]

In other words, Dewey was saying, "Make no mistake about it. We are talking about entering a commercial market." At the same time, perhaps to allay fears, he noted that he was not talking about a commercial market with profit to amount to anything. The field was actually too small and new for that. For the same reason, he also dismissed the effect that the business would have on local entrepreneurs who were presently supplying such items: "Such co-operation will conflict little with any established business" [16, p. 247]. At best it would simply displace occasional local jobs done for libraries. Dewey also noted that there would be likely a lot of aid from the book industry itself. Book houses might even become involved as manufacturers of the Association's needed supplies and devices because they stood to benefit from the enterprise:

"The advertising value of such supplies to any book house competing for library trade would induce it to furnish them at a trifling advance on the wholesale cost of manufacture" [16, p. 246]. Finally, Dewey noted that should the Association not wish to get into the enterprise directly, they might support an independent company that would in fact be controlled by the Association itself:

Should there be objections to this plan [i.e., using book-houses], offers have already been made by prominent and responsible parties to make needed library supplies under direction of a committee, who may pay for them as fast as distributed to participating libraries. It would thus be possible for a Supply Committee to carry on this work without drawing on the Association for capital or support, and still the whole matter would be under the control of the Association. [16, p. 246].

If the economics of Dewey's plan for the Association called for one kind of rationalization, the nature of an association that could function effectively in a set of such involved relationships called for still another. What kind of organizational structure would in fact be appropriate to control the kind of organizing Dewey had in
mind? Dewey’s answer to that question, provided in January 1877, three months after the Philadelphia conference, was that the Association should be one with strong corporate authority:

The satisfactory organization of the Association should take precedence of everything else, for individuals are backward in urging their plans when there is no authority to which they can be submitted for consideration. Even when brought forward, they amount to little, whatever may be their real excellence, because of the need of official approval. An equally important service will be rendered by this tribunal in pointing out worthless propositions before time and labor are wasted in trying what has been repeatedly found without value. Here again individuals hesitate to come forward and demonstrate the folly of the crude ideas submitted and zealously supported by those of little actual experience. There are scores of matters already broached, all of them worthy the examination and attention of the Library Association. But until the organization is perfected, and some one has the authority to appoint committees and divide the work, each waits for the other, and while all are anxious to have something done, comparatively few feel at liberty to do any thing. [16, p. 245]

The key terms here are, of course, “official approval,” “tribunal,” and “authority to appoint committees and divide the work.” Given the fact that the task was essentially a business matter, the Association had to be in a position of exercising the most astute business sense. That in turn required the authority to choose what seemed most widely usable and, therefore, salable to libraries as the market.

To implement this plan, Dewey called for the writing of a constitution. It was the Association’s constitution that would, in effect, fix the nature of its authoritative structure. The constitution was readied immediately, doubtless due to Dewey’s own labors on it, and printed in the March issue of the Journal. The first clause of its statement of purpose especially reflected Dewey’s overall goals:

Its object shall be to promote the library interests of the country by exchanging views, reaching conclusions, and inducing co-operation in all departments of bibliothecal science and economy. [21, p. 253]

The Association’s organizational structure provided first for an Executive Board consisting of five members who were not only empowered to increase their own numbers at will and from the total to appoint the stated officers of the Association and its three-member cooperation committees, but would act for the Association between meetings [21, p. 253]. Dewey was particularly enthusiastic about this provision because it provided a mechanism for choosing those persons most able to do the work of the organization while at the same time it guarded the organization from persons whose decisions or abilities were less than adequate:

The success of the Association hinges almost entirely on its officers, and a mistake here is well nigh fatal. In the hurry and confusion of the annual election the name first mentioned is sure to be chosen, and serious blunders would sooner or later be made. By the plan proposed this danger is largely obviated. The five members of the Executive Board would find it possible to canvass thoroughly the fitness of each person proposed for office, and thus select the most efficient. They have authority to add to their own number if they so desire, before choosing the officers, so that any member omitted from the Board may be added if it is found desirable to make him one of the officers or place him on one of the standing committees. We have some admirable librarians who would make very unsatisfactory officers, while others less widely known may be qualified for such duties. It would be impossible to consider and settle all these points in a general meeting, where most of those present are in a hurry to get through with the election so that other business may be brought forward. [22, p. 251]

The concentration of decision-making power in a small group was necessary, of course, considering the business nature of the work to be done—a matter that could not, in effect, be left to persons without business sense or to the hustle and bustle of open meetings.

Second, the provision of the constitution for cooperation committees—actually, a single Co-operation Committee and other committees, such as one for determining the correct method of measuring books, one on a new edition of Poole’s Index, and one on cooperative cataloguing, all of which more or less fed their
work into the hands of the Co-operation Committee—likewise elicited Dewey's enthusiastic approval because the Co-operation Committee was, in effect, the central decision-making body that would accept, revise, and approve the ideas and suggestions that would become supplies and devices to be manufactured for the economic well-being of the members of the Association:

We must have on this committee men able and willing to give much time and hard study to their work. They have power to appoint special committees to take particular subjects in charge; and thus their work is made possible, for a single committee could not properly attend to all that is to be brought forward. There are plenty of members of the Association ready to lend their assistance if they were officially appointed to do certain work. The Co-operation Committee can make such appointments and receive the reports for publication in the Journal. The other officers have the routine and regular business, but it is this committee that must do the pioneer work, and the importance of frequent consultation and discussion makes it very desirable that its members be in the same section of the country, so that frequent meetings may be practicable. [22, p. 252; 21, p. 254]

The work of the Co-operation Committee was in turn intimately tied to Dewey's Bibliothecal Museum. The Museum was Dewey's name for the central collection of examples of supplies that he had begun collecting since just before the Philadelphia meeting:

In connection with the Journal it will be the province of the managing editor to collect what the scientists would call a museum of comparative bibliography. To this each librarian is requested to forward at once two copies of each catalogue, class list, or bulletin of any kind; slips used in calling for books; charging cards; postal-card notifications for delinquents; lists of books reserved, etc.; laws or regulations; forms of application for use; guarantee and reference blanks, and other printed or like appliances. These should be endorsed with all particulars—as cost (noting quantity), date of adoption, manner of using, and the suggestions of experience as to improvements—that will illustrate their practical usefulness. Of these one set will be arranged by libraries, so as to show the complete method of any given institution; the other, by articles, to show the comparative merits of each. This collection will be freely at the service of all who may visit the Boston office, and it is scarcely necessary to point out that to those planning or improving libraries a few hours here will save months of perplexing travel and correspondence. Of course, the collection should be kept up to date by forwarding two copies of each new article as issued. It will also be used as the basis of a series of monographs on library appliances, which we hope to commence in an early number. [23]

The value of the Museum to the work of cooperation was, of course, that once various examples had been received, either the best of any one kind of form or a combined form having the qualities of the several best might then be used as a standard form. It was, in effect, something of a commercial research and development center. That the Museum and the Co-operation Committee were closely related Dewey explained one month after his above description of the work of the Committee:

It should be noted that [the Association's] work cannot be prosecuted successfully without the help of all, of which remark the corollary is that every librarian should at once send in his name for membership and back up his name with work. The great co-operative shout that was to be heard at the moon failed because each co-operator thought it wouldn't count if he were lazy and listened; the parable goes on to relate that a great silence fell upon the earth. If a librarian uses the Bibliothecal Museum, it is unfair that he should not contribute his blanks in turn; if he is to profit by co-operative work, it is unfair that he should not contribute his mite of suggestion, or criticism, or even a mere postal-card vote of approval. The entire experience, invention, and judgment of the profession should be focalized on this pioneer work. The several committees are gladly willing to waste a great deal of time—in considering suggestions and criticisms and in counting votes—for the sake of saving the time of the profession in the end. [24, p. 283]

Finally, the constitution called for annual meetings [21, p. 254]. Dewey suggested that they should be held in the summer vacation time, that they should be held at different locations around the country, that the Executive Board should always be present, and
that every fifth year a special effort should be made to have a specially well-attended "general" meeting that included foreign visitors as well. In contrast to the labor of the powerful central structure of the Association, where the actual work of cooperation would take place, Dewey suggested that the chief value of the annual meetings would be their potential for inspiration and for attracting new members [22, p. 252]. From the point of view of economics, this meant that the annual meetings were actually a kind of marketing device. Their chief purpose was to inform librarians all over the country of the "work" of cooperation and a means of getting librarians to join the organized library interests of the country. The meetings were explicitly not for doing only what the central structure of the organization could do, the actual work of cooperation—that is, deciding on products and devices—although they would have to act occasionally as the final approving body for the work of that central structure.

The need to have meetings that were essentially promotional and recruitment-oriented in tone puts one in mind of the fact that one of the major discoveries of business expansion during the late nineteenth century was the need for effective lines of communication. Dewey was likewise not unmindful of that need. In fact, communication had been the heart of his library organizational work from the beginning. It had certainly been one of the driving forces behind his establishment of the Library Journal, insofar as he used the Journal to communicate his corporate conception of library development to librarians across the country. In his April 1877 editorial he explained very directly how the Journal, as a means of communication, fit into his corporate ideal. After noting that not many suggestions or discussions of suggestions had been received, he stated:

Suggestions of what should be and criticisms upon what had been are equally in order, for one purpose of the Journal is to serve as a clearing-house for ideas. "Notes and Queries" forms an excellent channel for these things, and a single sentence on a postal card is often as suggestive as a long letter. In presenting such suggestions, the Journal neither approves nor disapproves them: they are simply "respectfully submitted." Some of them may have to do with flying-machines, indeed, but even then the ingenious inventor may present an improvement of more practical application than he himself makes. Yet there is one thing to be said: co-operation cannot do all things, and too much cannot be done at once. A few things usefully done this year will lay the foundation, and our "universal catalogues" may safely wait. The practical method is to concentrate attention on the plans already officially reported, and insure that these shall be put in the best possible shape. [24, p. 283]

The foregoing factors constituted, then, Dewey's means for achieving the advancement of library interests. His entire approach to the matter may be usefully summarized in the following way: The main purpose of libraries was to function as an adjunct to the educational goal of providing mental and moral cultivation to the masses. But libraries, by following their own methods and by devising their own means of management, had not so far been able to accomplish their task in an overall efficient manner. Libraries, though operated individually, had more in common than their individualism revealed, however. And when seen in the aggregate, their operations had the potential of being standardized and consequently made more economical. The resulting economy, if achieved, would make possible the achievement of their main purpose.

Before economy could be accomplished, however, the library interests of the country had to be organized. That meant providing for an economic link between libraries and their need for supplies, devices, and methods. The chief element of the organizational venture was to be the interposition of a formal organization (the ALA) between libraries and their common needs. The chief purpose of the organization would be to determine what needs were most important, collate the various examples designed to meet the needs, and reduce these to usable and salable products. In order to make wise decisions in what amounted to a cooperative business situation, however, the ALA had to be organized as an authoritative structure. Its final form included a powerful central committee that appointed an even more tightly knit committee to do the actual work and make the best decisions. In this way, the integrity of the financial nature of the venture would be assured and the goal of economizing libraries would be achieved with a minimum of disruption.
Given this general picture of the library interests of the nation and of Dewey's ideas of the means to advance them, it remains only to describe what actually happened. In particular, it is important to determine Dewey's role in subsequent developments and how his library contemporaries responded to him.

Dewey's Role in the Organizing of the ALA

The first thing to note of Dewey's role in the organizing of the ALA is that it had roots that predated the Philadelphia convention. Dewey had come to Boston not to continue as a practicing librarian but rather to make his living from independent commercial projects. The projects centered on publishing both his classification scheme and a library periodical and on selling library as well as other educational supplies. In doing so he was, of course, expressing nothing more than the spirit of commercial opportunity (and, of course, risk) common to his time. Money (even a fortune given the right circumstances) was to be made by the one who was able to organize a new market. He began by discussing his hopes regarding his projects with the publishers, Edwin and Fred Ginn, and sought to interest them in his plans. Soon afterward, however, he shifted the library periodical project to Frederick Leypoldt of Publishers Weekly, obviously because he was able to work out a strikingly better arrangement with Leypoldt. In fact, the arrangement, based as it was on the gross rather than the net receipts to be brought in by the periodical and allowing an office expense account, demonstrated Dewey's ability to sell an idea. Leypoldt eventually ended up taking significant losses with little to hold Dewey in check whereas Dewey earned money [2, pp. 30-31, 34; 3, pp. 117-18].

Throughout the spring and summer of 1876 Dewey was also deeply involved in selling metric measure supplies and in persuading teachers to use metric measure equipment in their classrooms. By far the largest amount of his time appears to have been taken up with plans for the Philadelphia library meeting, however, an idea that he pursued with Leypoldt and, beginning in May, with other library leaders. His work on the proposed library periodical and on the convention merged into a single activity into which he threw himself with obvious zeal [7].

It is not obvious from the various sources documenting Dewey's activities at what point the notion of the need to combine a library supply business with the purpose of the ALA became the driving force behind his organizational efforts. This is an important point because one might conclude that Dewey was anxious to have a successful convention with his later plans fully in mind. Certainly throughout the months of July, August, and September when he accomplished the greater part of the detail work of arranging for the convention (held in the beginning of October), Dewey was not unaware of the business possibilities that libraries and their librarians represented. His description of and call for contributions to his Bibliothecal Museum in the first edition of the Journal, dated September 30, 1876, also clearly suggests that by that date the prospect of doing at least some kind of business with libraries was already clearly outlined. There was simply no other reason to start the Museum.

On the other hand Dewey did not really present the view of library organization that was previously described at the convention itself. While there, he seems to have limited himself to his brief reiteration of the need for examples to be sent into the Museum. And he made only general admonitions about librarians pursuing economy and uniformity in methods and supplies. In fact, Dewey did not really forcefully present his concept of the ALA as a crucial element in his corporate vision until the January issue of the Journal.

All of this suggests the viability of the following speculation. It appears that having come to Boston for the purposes of pursuing commercial interests and having made his first significant breakthrough towards that end by beginning a library periodical, Dewey's first impetus was to press for the convention chiefly on the basis of the success that it would bring to the periodical. This is understandable given the fact that he was planning to make a good part of his living by means of the periodical. He was aware of the possibilities of selling library supplies, but his heavy activities on behalf of the convention itself and in selling metric equipment kept his library supplies on the back burner as it were, something that he could tap for the future when he had more capital of his own. By September he was already laying the groundwork for that future, in fact, by beginning the Museum. He may well have
unlikely that they did much of that. Homes, too, was as far away as Ames, Kansas, and while Ames was remote, Dewey was busy with his own library. The difficulty with the implementation was that the constitution had been devised in March 1877, its provisions were immediately implemented. The difficulty with the implementation was that the constitution had not yet been adopted officially by any vote of ALA members. In fact, it would not be adopted until the following September in New York City [25, p. 16]. With no official constitution, there was, of course, neither an official Executive Board nor a way to provide for one. That process required an election by the membership. At Philadelphia, all that had been provided was a slate of elected officers—a president, three vice-presidents, and a secretary/treasurer [8, p. 141].

Despite these restrictions, a self-styled and, therefore, technically unofficial Executive Board was functioning by April 1877 because the officers appointed and added to their membership a Cooperation Committee of three persons: Charles A. Cutter, Frederic Beecher Perkins, and Frederick Jackson [26]. The names of the individuals on the Executive Board who made the appointments were not given. One may suppose that they were Justin Winsor (President), Ainsworth R. Spofford, William F. Poole, and Henry A. Homes (Vice-presidents), and Melvil Dewey (Secretary) acting as a de facto board. They had been listed as those who wrote the constitution, and in the conference the following September they were unanimously elected as the first Executive Board.

Given Dewey’s instrumental role in the forming and shaping of the Association’s structure, it is important to be aware as well of his personal position within it. The first thing to note is that the Association functioned in an unofficial manner between March and September 1877. This had the effect of allowing Dewey to exercise considerable power. Once the constitution had been devised in March 1877, its provisions were immediately implemented. The difficulty with the implementation was that the constitution had not yet been adopted officially by any vote of ALA members. In fact, it would not be adopted until the following September in New York City [25, p. 16]. With no official constitution, there was, of course, neither an official Executive Board nor a way to provide for one. That process required an election by the membership. At Philadelphia, all that had been provided was a slate of elected officers—a president, three vice-presidents, and a secretary/treasurer [8, p. 141].

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That these men did as a group actually write the constitution and actively function as the Executive Board during the spring of 1877 is highly doubtful, however. Poole, who was in Chicago, and Spofford, who was in Washington, D.C., were both busy with their own libraries. They were also at distances that precluded any activity except that which could be conducted by mail. And considering the speed of the events of the spring, it is unlikely that they did much of that. Homes, too, was as far away as Ames, Kansas, and while Ames was remote, Dewey was busy with his own library. The difficulty with the implementation was that the constitution had not yet been adopted officially by any vote of ALA members. In fact, it would not be adopted until the following September in New York City [25, p. 16]. With no official constitution, there was, of course, neither an official Executive Board nor a way to provide for one. That process required an election by the membership. At Philadelphia, all that had been provided was a slate of elected officers—a president, three vice-presidents, and a secretary/treasurer [8, p. 141].

At that point considered no more than the possibility of selling library supplies in conjunction with ALA rather than through it. Sommer between September and January, however—perhaps because of the convention itself, what with the accolades he had received, or perhaps because of the positive responses to his appeal for Museum supplies—Dewey relentlessly pressed the plan already described, one in which the Association itself became the central organizational structure in his entrepreneurial dream. One thing is certain: between January and June 1877 Dewey relentlessly pushed for and achieved the kind of authoritative organizational structure that he needed for the task.

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Dewey's relationship to the Co-operation Committee should likewise be assessed. It is quite evident that the Committee became deeply involved in Dewey’s goal of getting supplies standardized, produced, and distributed. One might suppose that the Committee wholeheartedly engaged in that activity for no other reason than Dewey’s own powers of persuasion. But there appears to have been more involved than that simple cause-effect relationship. At least two of the three persons on the Committee—Perkins and Jackson—represented in many respects Dewey’s assessment that there were librarians in the Association who, though “less widely known,” were especially “qualified” for leadership [22, p. 251]. Perkins was at that time no more than a secretary and cataloguer at the Boston Public Library, and while he was from the prominent Beecher family of New England, could not be said to have been in the first, or even the second, rank of known and notable librarians. Jackson, for all intents and purposes, was an unknown outside of this particular connection with the ALA. Their appointment to positions of central importance in the ALA could only have placed them in a deferential relationship to Dewey.
Only Cutter, among the three, represented someone with status, having been the librarian of the prestigious Boston Athenaeum since 1869. Cutter, however, was neither very assertive nor one given to confrontations. The subsequent history of his relationship with Dewey strongly suggests that he never fully learned how to deal with the younger man. He appreciated Dewey’s ideas and often deferred to Dewey on that account, but on more than one occasion he also got “burned” in the process [27, pp. 187-90, 653-56, 709-18, 735-53]. Cutter’s membership on the Committee also represented still another element in the blend of interests that went to make up the chemistry of the situation, however. Educated like Winsor at Harvard before the Civil War, he was nevertheless of nonpatrician stock, though there were obvious patrician mannerisms in his quiet personal style. Furthermore, although his schooling included a strong dose of Scottish moral and mental philosophy that led him to be deeply sympathetic to an “uplift” interpretation of librarianship, Cutter was also greatly enthusiastic about and committed to library systematization. He was, in other words, very sympathetic to Dewey’s insistence on uniformity and standardization although for reasons that were far broader and more philosophical than those Dewey promoted [15, pp. 29-48]. Cutter, therefore, clearly supported Dewey’s goals of helping libraries and librarians. His presence on the committee could only have added prestige and authority to its work. But he personally was not one to enter into the kind of confrontations that would have been necessary to keep the Committee from misguided directions. He was not one, in other words, to rock the boat.

Dewey was not, of course, a formally appointed member of the Co-operation Committee. But he assumed the role of Secretary of the Committee. The public reason given for his action—that is, that he did so because he was also Secretary of the Board—was logical, of course, because the Co-operation Committee was actually a part of the board. Serving as the Committee’s Secretary was no more than an extension of his Executive Board duties [28, p. 284]. Whatever the rationalization, however, counting Dewey, the Co-operation Committee consisted thereafter of four persons rather than the three for which the constitution provided.

It should also be noted that the Co-operation Committee was in an exceptionally central and, in fact, authoritative position, because other project committees actually reported to it rather than to the Executive Board proper. This included even the Committee on Sizes (it established that the correct way to measure books was in metrics) which had been formed at Philadelphia prior to the creation of the Co-operation Committee. And after March 1877, no other project committee was appointed that did not offer it reports without an awareness of this organizational relationship, especially since Co-operation Committee members, most notably Cutter, often sat on and even chaired these other committees.

Given the foregoing description of the Executive Board and the makeup of the Co-operation Committee, one may summarize Dewey’s position in early ALA life as one of no less than overwhelming influence in making decisions. That others viewed this as troubling or even as a threat appears not to have been the case. Dewey was enthusiastic in a most positive sense. He was also effectively persuasive, although he could be overbearing. More important, he was one who willingly volunteered for what can only be called drudge work—the work of cooperation—work that involved painstaking details having to do with hundreds of forms, devices, and other similar matters. Finally, his goals of helping libraries and librarians could only have appeared to be reasonable and even commendable. What more could anyone have wanted, and what more could have been expected than to allow him to do his work unhindered?

Project Development

The effect of this tightly knit structure and Dewey’s role in it was striking in that every ALA project that was approved and set into motion between March 1877 when the Co-operation Committee was appointed and the Boston conference of 1879 originated with Dewey, often after Dewey had first written about the need for the project in the Journal. The projects themselves may be divided into two categories: those having to do with bibliographic matters and those having to do with supplies.

Projects having to do with bibliographic matters originated in the most general sense with Dewey’s article, “The Coming Catalogue,” published in the Journal in August 1877 [29; 30]. In that article Dewey called for the preparation and publication of a
standardized and annotated list of 10,000 books that would serve as a selection device for small libraries and as a guide to reading for individuals. His idea, eventually called the A.L.A. Catalog and reduced in size to 5,000 titles, was discussed in the Co-operation Committee at length but was not assigned to a subcommittee or working group until November 1878. One reason for the delay was the necessity of securing funding; another, finding someone to work on it; and a third, not having a standard code of descriptive cataloging rules by which to list the titles. In the interim, the attempt to solve the latter problem spawned what eventually became three other bibliographic projects: the making of a cooperative cataloging code, the provision for cataloguing-in-publication, and the making of a uniform subject heading list. Each of these led to the appointment of a subcommittee that reported to the Co-operation Committee: a Committee on Uniform Title Entries (March 1878); a Committee on Publishers’ Title Slips (August 1878); and a Committee on an Index to Subject Headings (July 1879).

Library Supplies, 1877-1879

Of greater importance than the bibliographic projects was that complex of activities that had to do with the provision of library supplies. Dewey considered this work the most important that the Co-operation Committee did and that fact is reflected in its reports, beginning with the first in the April 1877 issue of the Journal to the one given at the Boston conference in July 1879.7

The first important event to occur was that at its first meeting the Co-operation Committee assumed charge of the Bibliothecal Museum [28, p. 283]. Two months later, in May 1877, a full-page advertisement appeared in the Journal at the head of which was “CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE” and just under that, “LIBRARY SUPPLIES.” Two more followed in June and August [32]. By the following January, the terminology and form of the advertisements changed. They were printed under the heading “AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION//SUPPLY DEPARTMENT” and were in the form of textual discussions of the Committee’s decisions regarding which supplies and devices were deemed to be the best [33].8 These included not only devices especially manufactured upon the Committee’s approval, but also the devices of other companies that were given approval and handled by the “Department.” Advertisements for the other companies were also usually included in the Journal.9 In the front pages of the April 1878 Journal, Dewey devoted four full pages to a promotion of the ALA. His own rendition of the educational goal of the organization was itself a pitch for educators in all fields to join the ALA. One of the privileges he then described at length was the right to receive discounts on supplies [36, p. 44].10 Finally, in both the ALA promotional advertisement and in another text advertisement for the Supply Department at the end pages of the same issue, Dewey noted for the first time that among the goals of the Supply Department was that of securing a “slight income to the Association” [36, p. 43; 33(4), p. 92].

The notice of the profit-making that appeared in this advertisement in many respects provided a turning point for Dewey’s overall interpretation of library organization. He had not previously spoken of supplies as a profit-making venture. Here, without warning, and in a year in which the Association was not planning an annual meeting, the question of profit was broached for the first time. To an astute observer of that day, the implications might have been foreboding. How much profit was involved? Could the Association, in fact, be involved in this activity since it was not incorporated as a legal entity? And perhaps most perplexing of all, what role did Dewey and Dewey’s finances have in the profit? Events that occurred within the next two years related to these questions were ultimately to have a profound effect on the Association.

During the next eleven months (May 1878 to March 1879) the Co-operation Committee continued to issue reports on a variety of decisions that had been made with respect to supplies. In July 1879 at the Association’s Boston conference, Dewey provided in his report as Secretary some notion of what amounts of monies had been handled by the Supply Department during the previous two years. He began by saying that the Supply Department work was important especially since it had brought many new members into the Association, principally because of the discounts that it offered to ALA members. He then noted that though the work had begun slowly, a total of 364 orders had been filled over the entire period. They averaged $17.26 each and totaled $6,284.82, the total not including “hundreds of petty sales in the office.” He explained that the usefulness of the Department went beyond
even these figures because the operation had enabled the mailing of still other hundreds of packages of goods "either without charge or for fractions of a dollar." Thus, he found it imperative that the work continue. At the same time, Dewey noted that not quite all the expenses had been met. In fact, the "interest on the capital invested and the insurance" totaling $180.18 had "been provided for among ourselves." Experience had been gained, however, and in order to conduct the business in an even better manner, the Executive Board was considering two different plans of future procedure [37, p. 235].

What Dewey neglected to mention was that in March 1879 he had begun his own company, the Readers' and Writers' Economy Company, that would deal in library supplies. Shortly after his report, however, Charles Cutter, reporting in what would prove to be the last Co-operation Committee report until the Washington Conference in February 1881, supplied that missing information. Cutter's report was in many respects very significant:

The duties and powers of the Committee have never been defined by the Association, but one thing is plain,—they have no power to spend any money, nor to cause the Association to incur any debt. Hence when they established a Supply Department it was evident that they must confine themselves to recommending good library appliances and could do nothing towards furnishing them. The libraries would be obliged to get their supplies of the stationers or to have them made to order,—a costly matter, as we all know. An arrangement might have been made with some particular stationer, by which he should be the authorized agent of the Committee without involving them in any pecuniary liability. But the business of library supplies is peculiar. Some articles can be made at a very good profit, others, equally necessary when they are needed, can be sold only at a loss, or at least with no profit. Any business firm would have been very willing to provide the first, but would have kept carefully aloof from the others. The Secretary of the Committee, therefore, undertook with his own capital and his own risk, to carry on a manufacturing and selling Supply Department, of which he was to take all the loss, if there was loss, and the Association was to have all the profits, if there were any profits. The Committee never altogether approved of this one-sided arrangement; but they saw no other means of effecting the object proposed.

Now, however, that a company is organized for the express purpose of doing a business similar to but more extensive than that which the A.L.A. Supply Department had been doing, they think it best to transfer their stock and good-will to the new concern—the Readers and Writers Economy Company—and to close up their accounts. It is intended that the Committee, or their successors, should still continue to examine and decide upon the merits of new devices, and the Department will still have the benefit of the business ability of their Secretary.

The Committee believe that their course in carrying on a Supply Department—or rather in allowing one to be carried on—requires no justification. It is sufficient for them to call attention to the extraordinary activity of invention in all branches of library economy displayed of late. It is not too much to say that more contrivances have been devised, more improvements have been suggested in the three years since Melvil Dewey conceived the happy idea of founding the American Library Association, than in the previous three decades [38].

Taken at face value, Cutter's report may be interpreted to mean that a happy, though not altogether satisfactory, arrangement had been made to achieve the Committee's success. One unsatisfactory aspect of the arrangement had been that Dewey had assumed financial risk in order to do what only a company or a private individual could do, given the financial restrictions inherent in the Association. It had been a risk because of the nature of the library supply business. And it had been a risk because of Dewey's promise to turn any profit over to the Association. Cutter might have added, of course, that given Dewey's report of loss, the risk aspect had indeed been fulfilled. The other unsatisfactory aspect of the arrangement had been its quasi-official nature. Cutter claimed that the Committee had never "altogether approved" of the arrangement but rather had simply allowed it to occur. One may speculate that they might have voted on the arrangement. But in a sense they really did not have to. The activity of making supplies available and even of advertising a Supply Department had really been Dewey's initiative. The Committee seems to have acquiesced in his action...
mainly because it appeared to do no harm and in fact had not only promised benefit to librarians but had fulfilled its promise.

The solution to making a satisfactory rather than an unsatisfactory arrangement was to be found in supporting Dewey's new Readers' and Writers' Economy Company. The Company would not only do the work of the Supply Department; it would do it in a more extensive manner. Furthermore, it would, by implication, be carried on as a business. It would in effect rightly bring profit to its owners instead of putting the owners at a disadvantage. The Association would, however, retain a happy interest in the matter by continuing to be involved in an advisory capacity. The overall result would be to continue the good achieved up to that point.

It is obvious that the interpretation of the situation offered here is essentially positive. It suggests that Cutter was not attempting to apologize in some way for what might now be interpreted as improper behavior involving some sort of an attempt on the part of Dewey and the Committee to misrepresent the situation. There is actually no indication to suggest that anything other than a positive situation prevailed. In fact, if anything seems to have been established in the life of the ALA up to that point, it appears to have been hearty approval of Dewey's advance into the supply business and the overall benefit it had brought. True, there was some dissatisfaction with Dewey's over-emphasis on uniformity. But that was in the realm of bibliographic standardization rather than in the standardization of supplies. In the latter realm, Dewey's work was taken to be well worthwhile, so much so, in fact, that when Cutter mentioned that the alliance between Dewey and the Association would continue, no response of any sort was recorded suggesting that it might not be good to do so. It was that alliance, however, that would eventually prove to be deeply troubling to the Association.

**The Readers' and Writers' Economy Company: Beginnings**

Lacking his own funds, Dewey was able to begin his Company only after convincing Frederick Jackson, one of the members of the Co-operation Committee and the Treasurer of the ALA, to provide a substantial amount of capital for the project. Dewey also needed to move ahead with the project because of his marriage to Annie Godfrey the previous fall and the need for a more substantial income. Furthermore, neither his metric measure business nor the *Journal* were doing well. In fact, his contract with the *Journal* had been renegotiated to his disadvantage and during January 1879 he had engaged in an argument with Richard R. Bowker over its management that had almost led to his relinquishing the *Journal's* editorship altogether [3, pp. 120-21]. Finally, he could justify the move to found a company in terms of his sense of having invented the library supply business. His vision of what was possible in the business was in fact not a small one. Two years later he described his version of the potential business in terms that had distinctive overtones of a Carnegie or a Rockefeller:

> From boyhood I have had in mind the possibility of a business for helping educational & literary workers to do more work and with better tools. This passion for labor saving methods & devices has shaped my life till now. During school & college, then as librarian at Amherst college, since as editor of the Library Journal & secretary and manager of the three educational societies (the Metric Bureau, Library Association, & Spelling Reform Association), my whole life has been given to labor saving methods or devices, the work of the societies being all exactly in this line. In the fall of '78 it seemed to me that the time had come when my boyish ideal could profitably become fact. For some six months I reviewed the subject with the new light of immediate action & crystallized my thoughts & plans of 15 years into a prospectus which was printed early in '79. Business friends after giving thought to the plan assured me that there was a fortune in it & advised me under no circumstances to sell any part of the ownership of the business but to hold on to that tho I had to give up all the profits in the first years. I was convinced that a fortune was before me & that all my society work, which my friends had bitterly complained of as taking all my time with no compensation, was unexpectedly to me to become of great commercial value in making a constituency for the new Co. I found on trying for a few contracts that the plan was fascinating to all & that I was able thru it not only to get whatever I chose from inventors & manufacturers but on 10 to 20 per cent better terms than the oldest & largest houses in the country could obtain. I was sure from these early experiences...
that my most sanguine hopes were to be realized. Eminent men & leading journals gave the highest endorsement possible of the plan, among the most cordial, such representative papers as the Academy of London, the Revue Politique et Literaire, of Paris &c. To secure the needed capital to get started I offered my best personal friend, Mr. Jackson, liberal interest on the money & ½ the profits to be made & he accepted. I was to hav for my own the growth & good will of the business which I from the first looked upon as an invention, the result of my entire life. Tho not patented, the conception of the business was such & also its connection with the educational associations & my immense circle of friends that it was practically as well protected as any patent & I felt, as did my friends with whom I talked that it was a monopoly of the business which had no rival in any part of the world. The invention was to me a fortune & had before it an immense future.

I computed the matter & told my wife & friends that I would not sell it for $50,000, cash in hand even allowing for contingencies & that I really valued it at $100,000. The growth was very rapid from the beginning. It being an entirely new business everything had to be devised anew. The care & labor of organizing was enormous & the initial expenses & constant enlargements (averaging one each month during the entire first year) made the expense account unnaturally large. In spite of all this it seemed more & more clear to me that the business met a real want & would in time cover the entire country, with branches in all other civilized countries with one common head & able to control & monopolize many of the leading articles made & sold. My plan was, as fast as possible, to hav an agency within convenient reach of every literary worker in the country. Business men prophesied a great success & our patrons were loud in praise of the new idea. With the third month after opening our books we had secured contracts enuf, with those promised us later as soon as old connections could be severed, to vouch for the full success of my plan. . . . [39]15

The Reader’s and Writers’ Economy Company: Incorporation

In December 1879, that is within six months of the founding of the Company, Dewey made a move that would ultimately spell trou-

ble for his venture. Finding it necessary to seek other sources of funding so that the business might expand quickly, he incorporated it as a public joint stock company. Among the persons he eventually persuaded to purchase stock included Edward Wigglesworth, a wealthy and prominent Bostonian, and the two other members of the Co-operation Committee, Charles Cutter and Frederick Perkins. Dewey was elected President and Treasurer, Cutter and Perkins, Vice-Presidents and members of the Board of Directors. At first all seemed to go well. The Company expanded rapidly, establishing or making plans for establishing offices in other cities including New York and Chicago. And it proceeded with newer and larger contracts for supplies.

Dewey also continued to tout the relationship of his company to the ALA. In fact, so intertwined was that relationship in his thinking that it is difficult at best to separate the two in his public statements. For example, when Dewey reported as Secretary to the Boston ALA conference in July 1879, he explained that the Association absolutely needed an official office location, a place that could be called the “General Association Office.” He also reminded his audience that up to that time his own office where he edited the Journal had functioned as the Association’s center. Then he announced:

The executive board have now declared the General Offices to be at 32 Hawley Street under the charge of the secretary until otherwise voted. Under this authority, a beginning has been made. Our name appears upon the entrances and in the various directories, and we have a local habitation from which to issue our circulars, transact our business, and in which to grow. [37, p. 283]

He also announced a gratuitous trade-off in the process:

The newly constituted office is wholly without expense to the Association, and is offered only through the current year, but we all hope that nothing will occur to interrupt the present arrangement or to make a backward step necessary. [37, p. 283]

The address was, of course, that of the Economy Company and, except for this official statement, one wonders what indeed had changed. The Association’s business, at least that portion of it that
Dewey handled, had been centered at that location since 1877 when Dewey had moved there. And, indeed, he had always carried out his Association duties there without any official charge to the Association. Perhaps Dewey surmised that if the Association's home were officially at that address, the two entities would be even more closely identified in the public's eye. The fact is that the success of his company was intimately tied to its official ties with the Association, or so Dewey thought. The same identification of the company with the Association also continued through the next year in a more telling way. Full-page advertisements in the *Journal* in March and May 1880 began just as they had begun during 1878: “AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION//SUPPLY DEPARTMENT.” But at the bottom, instead of simply Dewey's Hawley Street address, one found “Readers' and Writers' Economy Company” in large print [40].

The intermixture of Company and Association also appeared in the expansion of services it offered. In January 1880, Dewey announced in the *Journal* that a “Consulting Librarianship” department had been started. After giving some background to the idea of consulting and emphasizing how much a general library consultant was needed, he noted that Frederic Perkins had been hired to fill the post that the department required. His office would adjoin that of “the secretary’s of the Association, at 32 Hawley street, Boston.” Perkins’s duties were to include editing the *A.L.A. Catalog* and beginning a manual of practical library procedures [41].

Now, Dewey nowhere clearly said that what Perkins was going to do was an ALA activity. But neither did he mention the Economy Company by name. By stressing the relationship of Perkins’s work to Association goals and activities, the impression was unmistakable. He appeared to say that the consulting department was an Association project. Of course, the ALA had no paid staff. Perkins was actually an employee of the Economy Company and the department of consultation was actually a department of Dewey's business, not of the Association.

Dewey made a similar announcement the following summer of an “Indexing Bureau,” the purpose of which was to contract with publishers for the indexing of the books they published. In that instance, however, no mention was made about hiring a particular staff member to fill the post. But, the connection with the ALA was implicit in Dewey's closing statement:

We hardly need add that the new Index Department is a part of the practical Supply Department, and should be addressed, like that, at the General Office of the Library Association, P. O. Box 260, Boston. [42]

The post office box was Dewey's alternative mailing address for ALA correspondence. It was usually listed, however, with the Hawley Street address.

Still another way in which the identification of Company and Association was apparent in Dewey's thinking was his announcement in February 1880 in the *Journal* that in the wake of the expansion of the Economy Company to New York City—it had leased a building there—the Association also had the opportunity to have an office there as well as in Boston. He spoke of the opportunity as an offer and compared it with what he called the offer of free office space in Boston the previous year. The fact that it was only an offer made little difference, however, because the description that followed made it plain that plans were already under way to establish the office [43].

Dewey's identification of the Company and the Association in his own thinking had one final, although less substantiated, aspect. In late 1879, Dewey persuaded Justin Winsor of the necessity to incorporate the ALA as a legal entity under Massachusetts law. This action was subsequently taken on December 10, 1879, with several individuals from Massachusetts who had attended the Philadelphia convention as witnesses. Dewey argued that one good reason why the Association should be incorporated was its potential thereafter to hold property without a tax liability. Another was “to secure some large gifts which, as we are not situated, we have no legal authority to receive or own.” The trade-off was again, as had been the case with the offer of office space, that Dewey agreed to assume all of the cost of the incorporation process, especially its legal fees. The fact that the Association was incorporated was not announced until one year later and then as a fait accompli in the *Journal*. Dewey explained that it had not been announced earlier because of the hope of also announcing the first gift received at the same time [44, p. 307]. What is much more likely is that in late 1879, when Dewey was grappling for ways to better capitalize the Economy Company, it seemed possible to secure funds as gifts to the Association. No such gifts were received however, and Dewey proceeded with the incorporation of the Company shortly thereafter.
The Economy Company: The 1880 Debacle

As noted earlier, Dewey's incorporation of the Economy Company was a move that was eventually to have dire consequences. To be more accurate, that move formed only the tip of an iceberg of several related moves. To begin with, it should be understood that Dewey actually had little, if any, of his own money in the Company. More important, he had few shares that he had actually paid hard cash for as had the other stockholders. He had, however, "invented" the Company. And, of course, it was especially through his labors in the Association that the market served by the Company began to take shape. Moreover, much of the inventory of the Company, though acquired with borrowed funds, was his. Finally, Dewey did function as the chief executive officer of the Company (as well as its Treasurer) and that had a value in and of itself in terms of wages. The problem for him was to show that a substantial, if not a controlling, number of the shares of the Company's stock were in actuality his as compensation for the above "assets." To make this official, however, he had to obtain from the Directors of the Company an official statement that recognized the value of those assets in terms of actual stock. Following that, the Directors had to fix his salary for his work as the chief executive officer of the Company.

Why none of this was done at the start is not known. But, by the late spring of 1880 he pressed the Directors for decisions of just this kind. To do so, however, they had to examine the Company accounts. But Dewey balked at the examination, preferring simply to state what the nature of their decision should be. When they finally did examine the books in the early fall, they were stunned by what they found. Dewey had kept all accounts for the Company, for the Metric Bureau and the Spelling Reform Association (which were likewise in the same office), for the Library Journal, for the American Library Association (he had become treasurer of the Association in the spring of 1880 upon Frederick Jackson's resignation), and of his own personal expenses in one ledger. They were so intertwined in fact that it was nearly impossible to figure out what funds belonged to which individual account. Furthermore, he had treated the funds of the other agencies (including some $400.00 of the Association's) as a sort of cash flow fund, and with other devices—for example, issuing pay raises to company employees in the form of stock certificates but with an agreement that he would be the temporary owner of the stock, and claiming worthless Metric Bureau stock as collateral for stock in the Economy Company—had used them to credit himself with stock holdings in the Economy Company. Suffice it to say, the remainder of the Directors were frightened, thinking that Dewey was attempting to defraud them and take the Company over wholly as his own. Three Directors, including Cutter, petitioned for an injunction on October 11, 1880, charging Dewey with fraud and mismanagement. The injunction subsequently issued barred him from the Company premises until the matter could be litigated.

The aftermath of the action was tumultuous. Dewey was unable to do ALA business because it was all on the Company premises. In fact the ALA treasury, mail and other official papers were effectively locked up. Dewey eventually came to an out-of-court settlement with the other stockholders in January 1881. It should be noted that an out-of-court settlement rather than criminal charges against Dewey was practically foreordained. It would have been difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate a charge of intentional fraud. It was obvious, of course, that Dewey was aware that the funds he had intermixed were not his own. But Dewey's argument that he was not attempting to steal anything was also persuasive. All he had attempted to do was to show value for what he considered to be his "invention." Furthermore, he had all good reason to believe that Company growth, which was expanding at a breakneck pace, would earn profits for him that would later enable him to straighten the entire matter out. The only real charge, then, was mismanagement. But laws regulating business management having to do with the nature of the Economy Company case were still years away. Furthermore, mismanagement might as well have been leveled at the other Directors also, who for several months had provided no checks on Dewey's activities. As in the Association, others had been all too willing to allow Dewey to do the actual detail work.

The Debacle and the ALA

The effects of the entire debacle on the ALA and Dewey's relationship to it are of greater significance here, however, than what happened in the legal entanglement. By the end of 1880, the Executive Board requested Dewey's resignation as Treasurer of
the Association. The Association was also a party to the eventual settlement insofar as the settlement provided for the return of the ALA treasury. More important, when the issue became public in October, the Executive Board chose not to throw its immediate support to Dewey but rather to determine what had happened and what course of action to follow. Their action is understandable because none of the Board proper—Cutter and Perkins were actually only “added” members of the Board—was involved in the business. Furthermore, the Board members also knew and associated with persons on the other side of the case. They had no desire, therefore, simply to jump in and take sides. It was this holding back of support, however, that made Dewey furious and led to his charges in private to them that they had both prejudged and betrayed him in a despicable manner. But his charges were more a reflection of his own thinking than of theirs. Of all the board members, only Samuel S. Green appears to have adopted anything of a condescending attitude. Winsor, in fact, acted as a personal counselor to Dewey and as something of an arbiter between the various parties. That the board did not in some way ostracize Dewey is also more than evident in the fact that not only did he continue as Secretary of the Association during and after the debacle, but he continued to sit in Executive Board councils as well.

One significant aspect of the debacle was its conflict-of-interest overtones. Conflict of interest may be defined generally as a situation in which one of the activities or interests of a person may be advanced only at the expense of another. More commonly, it is understood to concern money. It is thought of as a situation in which a person’s private financial interests benefit from his or her public activities. Public activities may be understood as related either to positions in government or to positions in nonprofit organizations usually of a cultural nature.

In viewing the debacle in terms of conflict of interest, one must be careful not to judge it by the heavy modern emphasis on money, however. Codes of ethics for governmental public officials such as those that have sprung up recently were not generally widespread during the late nineteenth century, if in fact they existed at all. And given that situation for government officials, codes of ethics were even less developed for the hosts of new associations and professional organizations that came into existence during the same period. Those organizations were simply too new to have broached the issue of conduct. They were still attempting to determine their purposes and gain some hold over their procedures. Furthermore, given the essentially wide-open business climate in which they came into existence, it is no wonder that there were fuzzy boundaries between their cultural functions and the commercial interests that surrounded them. That an organization is “for profit” or “not for profit” is simply too twentieth century in its overtones to be usefully applied here.

That the foregoing was the general state of affairs is more than illustrated in the present case. It is quite obvious that the Association’s officers had no qualms about the need for or the value of the services that Dewey rendered both as the force behind the Co-operation Committee and as the Director of the Readers’ and Writers’ Economy Company. Nor was there any question about the propriety of Dewey or any other person to earn a profit from such activities. Cutter, Perkins, and Jackson were, after all, as involved in that way as was Dewey.

What the Executive Board did have to settle, apart from the value or the profit of the matter, was the relationship of the Association as a corporate entity and of the Association’s officers to the entire venture. Quite apart from the issue of profit-taking, the most striking aspect of the conflict of interest that had arisen was Dewey’s abandonment of his regular Association duties and interests in favor of those more closely related to the managerial aspects of his business. Dewey neglected regular Association business so thoroughly, in fact, that the Association had well-nigh come to a standstill by the summer of 1880. Of course, Dewey might not have thought this was the case since he equated the two. An hour put in at the Company was the same as an hour for the ALA. Dewey also neglected the Library Journal so thoroughly that it too almost folded during the same summer. Only the work of Leypoldt and Cutter enabled it to continue, Cutter serving as de facto editor for at least the last three months of 1880 and as the stated chief editor after January 1881. In all fairness it should be noted, however, that the disruption of the ALA’s business was not simply a function of Dewey’s own involvement with the Company. Frederick Jackson left Massachusetts by the spring of 1880 for reasons of health. Frederic Perkins left Boston in the summer of 1880 for a library position in San Francisco. Cutter became enormously involved in Athenaeum business when the Athenaeum received a
sizable bequest and proceeded with architectural renovations. And Bowker, still another important force in Association business, especially with respect to its bibliographical projects, went to England in June 1880 to pursue the book trade there. By the summer of 1880, therefore, Dewey had in many respects been left high and dry, bereft not only of the close relationships he had developed with these men but also of their labor on projects that up to that point had been central to his corporate vision of the Association.

The Executive Board resolved the problem of Dewey’s conflict of time and energy as well as the legal relationship of his company to the Association by more clearly demarking the lines of separation. The Board appears to have required Dewey to concentrate more diligently on his regular Association business. At least this seems to be the implication of Dewey’s statement in late 1880 that, having relinquished his involvement in various business enterprises, he could thereafter attend more faithfully to his regular work in the Association [46, p. 275]. The Executive Board also appears to have required a distinct separation of Dewey’s business from that of the Association. At first, Dewey seems not to have realized this fact. Within a month of the settlement, Dewey rented new offices a block away from the old Company in order to begin a new company, the Library Bureau, that would serve the same market. It is also apparent that the new company included all that the old had and more. It not only had a supplies department, but also departments for employment, indexing, consultation, publication, and duplicate exchanges. At the Washington ALA conference in February 1881, perhaps feeling that he had been justified by the settlement, Dewey made a motion asking for the Association’s endorsement of

A library bureau, as a center for library interests, and to carry out, as far as may be, the plans for cooperative cataloging and indexing, title-slips, indexes to subject headings, the A.L.A. catalog, exchange of duplicates, the library manual, and the A.L.A., or the Cooperation Committee.

A motion was approved, but only as a request to the Executive Board to consider the endorsement. And the request was further qualified by the condition, “if they find it practicable, without pecuniary liability to officers or members of the A.L.A.” [47, p. 140]

Of course, the Bureau was already a de facto reality. Dewey, in his Secretary’s report the following year, appears to have considered the Association vote to have been an endorsement and reported on the Library Bureau’s work as if it were the Association’s [48]. But that was the last time he was to do so. Thereafter, no more official connection between the two was publicly made.

**Conclusion**

One may conveniently summarize the foregoing account of the first five years of the ALA and of Dewey’s role in it as a period in which not only had the Association been established but one during which the Association had to pass through the throes of beginning to define its effective domain. Dewey’s original version of what the ALA should be was obviously a combination of a public good combined with private enterprise, the whole shaped by a corporate ideal. If the ALA had followed this plan, it may well have become a sizable business rather than simply a cooperative, not-for-profit, cultural organization. Dewey’s attempt to form such an enterprise vividly expressed the spirit of the times insofar as it represented a groping towards defining the nature of an organization such as the American Library Association. In the end, he failed to win approval for his corporate entity. And his failure essentially determined the first step in defining the Association’s cooperative basis.

The story does not end here, however. Dewey’s subsequent move to New York City and then to Albany, his shaping of still another model of library organization from those bases of operation, and his attempt to bring that second model to bear on the ALA during the period between 1892 and 1897 further helped to define the nature of the ALA. But that, of course, is beyond the scope of this paper and must await another opportunity for presentation.

**NOTES**

1The description of American industrial and commercial development, social change, and matters pertaining to the corporate ideal presented here in only the most general way is taken in the main from Boorstin [9], Wiebe [10], and, especially, Cochran [11, pp. 51-109]. An interesting account of the efficiency
Dewey and the Corporate Ideal

The Evidence

"It Dewey % The In Lockwood, Brooks
standardized placard prohibiting spitting on library floors. That offered by
evident in his letterbooks and personal diary for the summer of 1876, both to be
number, were first touted by the Committee in [34]. In addition, editorial
in the Journal between 1876 and at least mid-1880 are assumed to be Dewey's. There is no reason to consider them otherwise. Dewey was far too jealous of his role in the creation of the Journal to have allowed others to write them. Besides, who would have written them? Leypoldt was not conversant with librarianship the way the editotials suggest. Bowker was at that point still not as directly involved with the periodical as he was after 1881. And, finally, the content of the editorials are patently Dewey's in their outlook.

The variety in cataloging is nowhere more evident than in the list of 1,010 catalogues appended to Charles A. Cutter's article "Library Catalogues" in [6, pp. 577-622].

Dewey also argued that it was unlikely that the resultant savings would then make a case for reducing the entire library budget, mainly because he concluded that libraries tended to be on fixed incomes.

Evidence for Dewey's commercial dealings in metric supplies are more than evident in his letterbooks and personal diary for the summer of 1876, both to be found in the Dewey Papers at Columbia University Library.

The five men had been elected as officers at the end of the 1876 convention [8, p. 141]. It may well have been concluded that since the constitution drew officers from an elected board, then it was reasonable to make a board of previously elected officers.

A total of sixteen reports were given during a time period that covered twenty-eight months, or about every two months. The items covered are incredible in their scope, including everything from library furniture to, in [51, p. 223] a standardized placard prohibiting spitting on library floors.

Actually, the first [33(1)] reversed the display, placing "SUPPLY DEPARTMENT" above the name of the Association. The others [33(2)-(5)] placed the name of the Association first. One wonders if Dewey's preoccupation with selling made him temporarily forget the proper protocol.

The pumped number labels of the P. F. Van Everen Company of New York City, advertised as useful for placing on books as well as on anything else one desired to number, were first touted by the Committee in [33(3)]. Van Everen's first ad [34] appeared in the same issue. Other similar correlations may also be made. On the other side, Dewey seems not to have cared at all for competition such as that offered by Lockwood, Brocks & Co., although he accepted advertisements from them [35]. Still, it is interesting that whereas the Supply Department and Van Everen ads were specifically indexed in the Journal's index, Lockwood, Brocks & Co. ads were not.

Dewey's authorship of the promotion is assumed for the same reason that his authorship of the editorials is assumed (see note 2).

11It is not altogether clear to whom Dewey was referring by the phrase "among ourselves," although it is likely that he meant himself and Frederick Jackson, a member of the Committee and his partner in the business. If one allows (conservatively) even a ten-fold increase in dollar values between 1879 and 1981 (i.e., $1.00 then is equal to $10.00 now), Dewey did the equivalent of $62,850.00 (nearly $100,000.00 if an increase of 15x is used) in business in two years. That he should have reported hundreds of petty sales as well was also not insignificant.

12The alternative would be to offer a negative, conspiratorial view of the activities of Cutter and Dewey. A case might be made for it, especially since Cutter stood to benefit from his connection with the Company. Also, there is at least one discrepancy in Cutter's account which makes one wonder how accurate it was. Cutter noted that the Supply Department would transfer its "stock" to the new company. If, however, the Committee could only advise rather than own supplies, how then could it transfer anything? Dewey, not the Committee or the Association, owned the supplies. On the other hand, perhaps he only said that as a manner of speaking. The Committee had operated as if it were in business, even though it was not officially so. In other words, the line between the Committee's work and Dewey's commercial work was so fuzzy that Cutter had difficulty talking about it.

13The attempt to control subcommittee work ran into something of a roadblock with the Committee on a New Edition of Poole's Index. Poole resisted attempts to standardize the citation formula into a format that approximated Cutter's Rules for a Printed Dictionary Catalogue. And he presented Dewey's suggestion that it be made into a classified list. In the end, however, the overwhelming forcefulness of Dewey and Cutter took its toll. Some notion of the forces at work may be seen in relevant articles in the Journal for May and June 1878. Also see [27, pp. 437-39].

14A useful discussion of the Economy Company as well as citations to many of the most pertinent sources regarding it, see Garrison [3, pp. 120-24].

15It should be recognized that Dewey's account of the beginnings of the Company was written for the use of his lawyer for preparing the out-of-court settlement that was eventually made. One of its purposes was, therefore, to show that he invested in the business. Another was to demonstrate its great worth. The account, written during the especially trying interim period between October 1880 and January 1881, was subject to his own deep emotions and was obviously inflated by him. Still, there is value in seeing how his mind worked. Certainly not all of it, perhaps not even much of it, was fiction, at least with respect to his vision of success. Again, converting his figures to a present equivalent (10 x 1 or 15 x 1), Dewey was talking of a business worth between one-half and one million dollars.

16The principal sources for the events described here in only the most general way are the various documents found in the Dewey Papers, Columbia University Library, Boxes 61 and 81. These include copies of the minutes of the Company, of various legal papers, as well as some pertinent manuscript letters. Frankly, however, the details of the legal entanglement seem not nearly so important as the overall effect of the debacle.

17The Executive Board changed its membership slightly in 1879 (actually the first real election, the 1877 vote having been more of a confirmation than an election). Besides Winsor, Poole, and Dewey from the first Board, it included James L. Whitney (Boston Public Library) and Samuel S. Green (Worcester Free Library) [45, p. 303].

18That Cutter had taken over the Journal as early as October 1880 is attested to in a note of his to Bowker dated October 4, 1880, New York Public Library, Bowker Papers.
SOURCES


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32. “CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE//LIBRARY SUPPLIES” [advertisements]. Library Journal (May 1877), 346; (June 1877), 383; (August 1877), 454.
33. [Advertisements for A.L.A. Supply Department.] (1) Library Journal 2 (January-February 1878), 243; (2) 2 (March 1878), 2; (3) 2 (March 1878), 35; (4) 3 (April 1878), 92-93; (5) 3 (May 1878), 102.
34. [Advertisement for gummed book numbers of the P. F. Van Everen Company of New York City]. Library Journal 3 (March 1878), 36.
35. [Advertisements for Library Supplies by Lockwood, Brooks & Co., Boston]. Library Journal 2 (October 1877), 52; (November-December 1877), 98.
40. [Advertisements for “SUPPLY DEPARTMENT//AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION” and Readers’ and Writers’ Economy Company (at bottom of ad)]. Library Journal 5 (March 1880), 66; (May 1880), 159.

