

Today we are dedicating a library building, and for many of you who have been active in its funding, planning and implementation, this is, indeed, the culmination of a long term project. For you this represents an end, and you can justifiably take satisfaction from your labors.

But from my point of view--this END, for some of you, merely marks a beginning for me and for many others, and what we are here dedicating is not only a job well done, but a job well begun. The challenge before us is to develop within these walls an outstanding research collection--a repository of human knowledge--a major tool, if you will, of a great university.

For a university is, above all else, a place of creativity; a place for the examination, shaping, and birth of ideas; a place of exploration and free inquiry. Therefore its library must be the repository--the record--of all man's works: his ideas, his discoveries, his aspirations and his failures. If this be so, an university's quality is in large measure determined by the excellence of its library. There is certainly no doubt in my mind that the library is, indeed, the heart of a university. I think that Benjamin Wheeler felt somewhat the same when, in 1899, as President of the University of California, he said, "Give me a library and I will build a university around it."

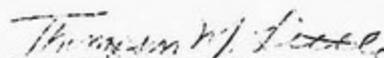
But libraries have been with us for thousands of years; so long, in fact, that perhaps we take them for granted. We tend to forget that libraries do not just happen. On the contrary they are only created by great acumen and considerable sums of money. Ptolemy II must have had both, for two centuries before Christ, he borrowed the great works of Greek scholarship to copy them for his library in Alexandria. Ptolemy's library served as a center of research and scholarship, and foretold by 2000 years Thomas Carlyle's pronouncement that "the true university ... is a collection of books." More recently Norman Cousins modified the famous metaphor of Socrates, when he described the library as "the delivery room for the birth of ideas--a place where history comes to life."

And if new-born ideas and great accomplishments are indeed built upon the work of other men, then great research collections are the indispensable tools with which all serious investigators must work. The magic of a library is that it brings together the record of men's lives in order that there may be another step forward.

The conception of a research library as a place where dusty scholars nod over equally dusty books is obsolete. The modern research library, transformed by modern technology, has become an increasingly complex arsenal of ideas. Books pour in from all over the globe, not only in English, but in such languages as Tamil, Urdu, Arabic, Uzbek, and Malay. The range of subject matter is wider than the languages in which it is recorded. From race relations to radioisotopes, from atoms to arbitration, from the physical effects of chemicals to the political methods of Communism. Although the scientific technical report, microforms, phonodiscs, audio tapes, and manuscripts, films, maps and government documents from Kenya as well as Kansas flood the library at astonishing rates.

To acquire, organize, and to make available this mass of resource material is the responsibility of the modern academic librarian.

In conclusion then, we are really gathered here for a twofold dedication: on the one hand, we have the pleasant and terminal task of dedicating this library building; and on the other hand, we have the awesome and more responsible task of dedicating ourselves to the commencement of a program that will produce in the years ahead an academic library of such excellence that it will soon take its place as one of the major resource collections in the United States.



Thompson M. Little, Director
Vernon Roger Alden Library
Dedication: 23 May 1969