

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - MICROPHOTOGRAPHY

\$35,000 - RF 38002 January 1 - December 31, 1938
extended to December 31, 1939

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Library of Congress
Microphotography

Appraisal: The grant of \$35,000 during 1938 to establish and equip
September 1938 a laboratory of microphotography at the Library of Congress
December 1940
appears to have been made at a strategic time in the development of this
medium for library and archival purposes. Commercially the country had
then some twenty-five centers or firms offering microfilm production.
Chief among these was the Eastman Kodak Company. A large number of news-
papers had begun to purchase film copies of their dailies and weeklies
for their record files, and the Eastman Company in particular was promot-
ing the possibilities of other trade channels. Only at four or five
centers could the scholar or educational institution get the advantage
of non-commercial rates, and it was clear that the large commercial units
in the microfilm field might control prices in a way to hamper all library
developments. By centering the requests from educators and libraries at
the Library of Congress the grant at once opened possibilities for experi-
ment and economic production under advantageous circumstances. At about
the same time the American Documentation Institute was organized with a
small grant from the Carnegie Corporation as an operating fund and with
Washington as its base of operations. The Institute will have some
international value, once it has organized the interested groups in the
United States. In cooperation with the American Library Association and
the Institute, the Library of Congress now can promote the use of micro-
film in intelligent fashion. There was likelihood of excess enthusiasm
over its possibilities, whereas now these agencies will develop sound
policies of use. Much of the experimental development will go on at the
National Archives, where microfilm is to be the medium of storing large
masses of rarely used documentary records.

A final note on this project will be added when the accounting of expenditures is made by the Library of Congress. This should be shortly after the terminal date, December 31, 1938.

December 1940 The appraisal of September 1938 carries the statement of aims and opportunities of the new microphotographic service at the Library of Congress. At the end of the grant the purposes have been realized to a far greater degree than anticipated. The center is now recognized as ready to serve all comers outside the commercial market. It has far more orders from universities and individual scholars than can be met immediately. It also is helping to replace the newspaper collections of the Library of Congress that are being discarded because useless for readers in their present form. In the autumn of 1940 the Library of Congress took the initiative on a canvass of all scholars in the humanities and social sciences in order to determine priorities of items wanted from foreign libraries. It will develop a project to make the Library a depository of films in all fields where small demand makes clear the inability of institutions to finance complete files.

DHS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS - MICROPHOTOGRAPHY (Cont'd)

Objectives: This grant was made to provide the Library of Congress with full equipment of modern machines and laboratories for microphotography. The state of invention and experiment has now reached the point where we know the actual and commercial charges possible in mass production of microfilm copies. Also, non-commercial agencies have had enough experience with the process to warrant help in establishing one or more centers to give service to educational institutions at minimum cost. In December 1936 the Foundation made a grant to the University of Chicago to establish a laboratory for experiment and production of film, largely as an ally of the American Library Association. A grant to the Association financed the demonstration at the Paris Exposition in 1937 that gave international publicity to the possibilities of development in this field. Help to the Library of Congress was the logical step in the direct concentration of applications and of interchange of films among American institutions and between educational or research groups in this and any other country. For example, the two grants to facilitate microfilm copying of Chinese books and manuscripts have had their effect in spite of war conditions, so that through help of the Foundation the American scholar now can get film copies of Chinese materials whenever purchase of the original is impracticable.

In a market that is still confused, the Library of Congress establishment for film copying will have strong influence on costs of production. The need of a fluid fund of \$10,000 is due to the federal requirement that no services in the Library be sources of profit. Consequently with this external grant the Librarian is free to act outside his fixed regulations in a way that gives the fund temporary additions that can be applied later to reductions in cost to applicants. Though the Librarian might have had appropriation from Congress for installation of the needed equipment, help also was desirable on this item because this sort of request is always subject to question in review of the budgetary proposals, simply because of its size and irregular nature.

Another reason to make the grant to the Library for setting up this laboratory is to meet the pressure of commercial firms desiring to discourage such independent development of photographing and processing. If the Library of Congress is able to give a cost yardstick on microfilm work, educational institutions and individual scholars will have the necessary protection against high prices. The logic of placing this equipment in the Library of Congress is obvious, for this is the only institution in the United States with bibliographical facilities adequate to demands of all students and with borrowing facilities that make possible international loans.

Fulfillment: Funds supplied by the RF for this project were used in two **September 1938** ways: 1) \$10,000 was held as a revolving fund for expenses **December 1940** of expert operators, materials and so forth; 2) \$25,000 was used for purchase of equipment. It was early decided that outright purchase was preferable to rental of expensive machines frequently set up commercially on that basis by the Eastman Company. As new apparatus was

being continually perfected \$5,000 (of the \$25,000) was held for later expenditure when improved models had come into production. Since certain desired equipment was not available at the expiration of the grant the period was extended to December 31, 1939 at which time \$1,400 earmarked for an Eastman microfilm was still unexpended. As a satisfactory instrument was not available at that time a second extension of the grant was requested but refused and the balance of \$1,468.54 was therefore refunded to the RF. It was expected that aid for this purpose would be requested at a later date.

The microphotographic service is in charge of George A. Schwegmann, Jr., acting with the advice of a small committee which included Vernon D. Tate, Director of Reproduction and Research at the National Archives, Rush and Raney of the ALA and Watson Davis of Science Service. In June 1939 the Laboratory was moved to quarters provided by the Library in a newly constructed wing. At that time Mr. Schwegmann reported that a steady flow of orders was keeping the reproduction unit in constant use and was providing an income which not only covered expenses, but allowed the accumulation of a small surplus; in fact, the revolving fund had increased to approximately \$16,000. One item, of special interest to the Foundation because it derived from a project in the Far Eastern program, was an order from the University of Washington for 30,000 frames of film copy of Chinese documents in the Library of Congress.

During the early months of 1939 Dr. L.H. Sayce of Durham University, England, and F.W. Bobb of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania worked at the Library of Congress. This was in accordance with RF program for improving technical services for scholars and librarians by offering to a few men training in microphotography at certain important centers. The report of Mr. Bobb's observations in the laboratory contains the following remarks: "Mr. Schwegmann and his chief technician, Mr. Donald Holmes, have devised a most ingenious apparatus for the rapid projection onto rolled sensitized paper, of microfilmed Library of Congress catalogue cards. By this means they have succeeded in obtaining a facsimile card at a cost of 3/4 of a cent per card. Without doubt the Library of Congress handles more outside requests for photo-duplication than any other establishment visited.

"Their continuous photostat machine in which the sensitized paper is printed, developed, fixed, washed and dried is a great labor-saving device. However, very few places could justify the installation of such a costly piece of equipment.

"The microfilming is done with a Recordak newspaper camera. And as the Photostat justifies its cost and bulk, so does the Recordak Camera, for negatives of superior quality are obtained with minimum effort on the part of the operator and in very short time. Every indication pointed towards the establishment of a photo-duplication department which probably will remain without equal for a long time."

Of allied interest is a travel grant provided by the RF to permit Mr. Tate, to study methods of documentary reproduction in Europe. After Mr. Tate had attended the conference of the International Federation of Documentation at Zurich in the summer of 1939 he was obliged to abandon the rest of his program because of the outbreak of the war.

Financial Statement

Grant
\$35,000 - RF 38002

Payment
\$33,531.46

Lapse
\$1,468.54

Source material

Letters:

11/27/37 Dr. Putman to DHS
11/8/39 A. MacLeish to DHS
6/18/39 V. Tate to IAL
4/17/40 GJB to A. MacLeish

Interviews:

10/21/37 DHS
12/7/37 IAL
10/20/38 DHS
10/28/38 IAL
11/3/38 DHS
3/23/39 DHS
6/2/39 IAL
2/1/40 DHS

Report:

F.W. Bobb to RF April - July 1939