

12/5-6/39

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It was, on motion,  
RESOLVED that the sum of Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) be, and  
RF 39098 it hereby is, appropriated to the NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
for the development of services in MICROFILM, of which  
\$10,000 shall be for equipping the microfilm laboratory  
and \$5,000 for a revolving fund for the production of material.

NEW YORK  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY -  
MICROFILM

The following were the considerations presented:

Humanities

Previous Interest: The Foundation has helped in establishing adequate laboratories for microfilm copying in the Library of Congress and at the University of Chicago. The latter is for use of the American Library Association as a demonstration center and for general production of material at the University.

General Description: The request of the New York Public Library is to give the Reference Department at the central building equipment for microfilm copying. The Reference Department is one of the two major divisions. Its magnitude is suggested by the records of 1938, when over 2,000,000 readers used nearly 5,000,000 items in the reading rooms. All the collections of special kind had increased demand for service. Noteworthy collections having national and international use are the maps, manuscripts, genealogical and local records, music, drama documents, and periodicals. The collection of periodicals and newspapers is exceptional and is one source of constant work for the Photographic Division which has responsibility for the internal needs of the Library and for the copies requested from a great variety of external sources.

To meet the demand from sources outside the Library the 11 persons in the Photographic Division must have adequate equipment to produce on film the long runs of copy. They now have a small production camera for short runs but are compelled to decline requests for large orders or to place them with commercial companies. Both practices are unfortunate, for each requires loan of valuable documents and reliance on others for the quality of the product. The other method of producing copy from documents, by photostat, has been used to advantage for many classes of work. The photostat service turned out 150,000 prints in 1938. This is probably the maximum amount usefully produced



in this form, as photostating is expensive and inferior to filming for large runs of material chiefly used for reference purposes.

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Thus far the requests from outside sources have had indifferent handling because modern filming mechanisms were not at hand. In spite of these disadvantages the staff has a good record of performance in microcopying. The New York Public Library cared for the first film order on newspaper work in this country to give buyers large production at low rate. This was in handling the filming of the New York Times for the years 1914 to 1918. The staff also is now caring for the largest newspaper project in the history of microfilm. For a year it has directed the filming of back files of the New York Tribune 1841-1924 and its successor, the New York Herald-Tribune. Half of the work is finished. These two newspapers can now be bought in film copy and are used in that form increasingly. A good example of the co-ordinating ability of the Division appears in the gathering from four sources of the needed issues of the first Negro newspaper in America for filming. Freedom's Journal for the years 1827-1829 can now be had on film at low cost. Twenty-one libraries already have subscribed for copies. (Continued)

These three instances of work in progress suggest the variety of work for libraries here and abroad that can be done with proper equipment. Demands of individuals are in every class of material. Commercial organizations, particularly those with research librarians, want film and photostat records of inventions, patent records, and technical data. The kinds of request constantly coming to the Photographic Division show the importance of the New York Public Library as a national institution that supplements in many respects the service of the Library of Congress.

While developing adequately the help to outside claimants on the use of equipment, the Photographic Division will restore to use a great mass of material now held out of circulation in the building. Old newspapers and ephemeral literature on poor paper are among the most valuable possessions of the Library. All the large collections of newspapers in constant demand are as open to destruction by use as the rarer ones. The equipment would enable the Librarian to put these materials out of circulation, giving readers only the film copies. By doing so he would make a great saving in the repair rooms where silk or tissue covering now is pasted on damaged or old sheets before they are put back into circulation. Preservation and easy handling of copy on film will have the added advantage of saving floor space as these old documents are removed from the active shelves.

The Library needs a fund of at least \$5,000 for temporary investment in the production of long runs of material for other libraries and for making negative films of their own extensive collections. The library of negatives will slowly become a source of income.



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Finances: It is recommended that the \$10,000 for new equipment be made available for immediate use. The \$5,000 for a revolving fund likewise will be most useful if paid in full immediately. The planning of space and acceptance of orders depend on the assurance of available funds without restriction.

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(Continued)

Future Implications: None.

Comment: The funds for the Reference Department are not adequate to meet the demands of the Library. For 1939 the estimated deficit is \$100,000. Without retrenchment this will be doubled in 1940, so that there is no prospect for free money to care for this item.

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