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STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE

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STUDIES IN SCOTTISH LITERATURE

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EDITORIAL

With steadily rising publishing costs pushing up the price of books and periodicals, and with an increasingly large number of journals to interest the reader, both scholars and the general public find themselves unable to subscribe to all of the journals they read. Consequently readers have come to rely on the university or public library which serves them for all but a few periodicals.

The responsibilities of the public or institutional libraries have grown enormously in recent years, too. Their ever more complex role in training citizens for the immediate future as well as expanding to answer diversified needs of research, place a great strain on their facilities. The well-stocked library must spend large sums to keep abreast of current book publishing. Not infrequently demand is such that more than one copy of a work is needed; with increased use older volumes require replacement, and this, too, is costly. In addition the library must make a judicious selection of periodicals to which it will subscribe. There are, we suppose, few libraries which carry all the periodicals their users would wish to see on the shelves, but with union catalogues and modern inexpensive photo-duplicating processes almost any article can be had by return of post.

Because the use made through borrowing or photo-copying a periodical does not show up in subscription lists, it is difficult for an editor to accurately assess the impact his journal is having. Many highly regarded journals do not have a wide circulation beyond libraries; in fact the proportion of private subscribers some of them have is very small indeed. Yet no one would deny the essential service these journals render to the scholarly and intellectual community.

It is evident, therefore, that, with few exceptions indeed, the scholarly journal must be dependent upon outside support if it is to stay alive. (We refer to journals in the humanities, although scientific journals are, presumably, in much the same plight.) Only a small proportion of the deficit can be made up through advertising revenues; many journals prefer to carry no publicity. Very few foundations are willing to subsidize journal publication, a fact that reflects little credit on the foundations. The burden of support has consequently fallen, as much by default as for any other reason, on the universities.

Here, too, the situation has been far from ideal. Moderately well-to-do universities not infrequently support a journal while more affluent schools sit idly by. This is not to suggest that none of the larger universities does its part—Harvard and the University of Chicago are two outstanding examples of universities which support a number of highly regarded journals. In not a few universities, however, the idea persists that a good journal should be self-supporting. No college president, comptroller, or head of the board of trustees expects the multi-million dollar atomic reactor to show a profit. Its *raison d'être* is the extension of the frontier of knowledge. Is there more reason to expect the scholarly journal to pay for itself?

The continuation of *Studies in Scottish Literature* has recently been assured through the action of Dr. Thomas F. Jones, President of the University of South Carolina, in agreeing to subsidize it as a publication of The University of South Carolina Press. The enthusiasm of Drs. William H. Patterson, H. Willard Davis, and John C. Guilds, respectively Dean of the University, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Chairman of the Department of English of the University of South Carolina, played an essential part in making this arrangement possible.

At this time it is perhaps in order to sum up the substantial progress which has been made by *SSL*. This journal is sent to twenty-one countries. Most major universities and public libraries in this country and the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand subscribe to it. In addition we are fortunate in having a larger than usual proportion of private individuals on our mailing list.

With its future assured, the Editor hopes to be able to make *SSL* even more useful for those who are interested in Scottish literature. An annual bibliography of books and articles of Scottish literary interest is to be added, and it is hoped that a survey of poetry, fiction and belles lettres can soon become an annual feature.