

# State Reference Library Busy Agent

(Ed. Note: A little-known part of the legislature, the legislative library, is described in a guest column prepared by its chief, M. G. Toepel, as a substitute for the usual dispatch of John Wyngaard.)

By M. G. TOEPEL

MADISON, Wis.—For months the Legislative Reference Library has been working at top speed to provide various services to the legislators. Nearly 4,000 requests for bills, resolutions and amendments were drafted or checked. Almost a thousand reference requests were answered. Literally hundreds of thousands of pages of typing was done to provide the necessary distribution of legislation and reports.



Toepel

Now that the legislature has adjourned, many people have the impression that the Legislative Reference Library is placed in moth balls and decommissioned until the

1953 session approaches. Such is not the case. A very definite series of operations begin immediately after the session to organize the materials developed during the hectic days of the session and to prepare for the next session.

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IMMEDIATELY AFTER the session the drafting records of each bill enacted into law and all amendments are assembled in a single file in order that lawyers and interested citizens who desire to know the background of any act may study the information conveniently. During the session a card file is prepared by subject matter for every bill and resolution introduced. It is possible to determine at a glance the number of bills on any one subject introduced and the identity of each one. At the end of the session this file is integrated into a permanent record file of all bills on each subject introduced into the Wisconsin legislature since 1899.

Many people re interested not only in the acts passed but in the original bills introduced, their amendments, and the bills which failed of enactment. The library therefore assembles in chronological order, all of the bills introduced, and their amendments. These, too, are on file since 1899. After the legislative staffs have completed that work the Legislative Reference Library is called upon frequently to provide copies of bills, acts and journal entries for particular days.

DURING THE NEXT three months the library will prepare for next session. Experience makes it possible to anticipate many of the questions which inevitably will arise next session. Sources of information will be combed for materials relating to a hundred or more subjects which may become important. Material on these subjects will be ordered from other states. Such materials will be carefully classified and integrated into the 80,000 or more items now on file in such a manner that something may be found on most any subject in a matter of minutes.

In addition to setting up available material for ready access, a series of research studies will be started on similar subjects. Literally hundreds of such reports have been prepared in the first 50 years of the existence of this library. Beginning this year we hope to make such reports more formal and more widely available.

All of the information developed by this library in research reports is factual in nature. No effort to propose solutions is made.

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WHILE THIS WORK is going on some 15 or more specific studies authorized by the legislature will be under consideration on the opposite end of the capitol by the Legislative Council.

Many people are of the impression that the functions of the two agencies duplicate. They complement each other. The library provides materials for the council study groups. In addition the library may, at request, carry on factual studies of segments of various council studies. The results thus obtained are submitted to the council committees for their use as background information.

As the interim period progresses legislators and others interested in legislation will again begin to call upon the library for materials and information. The gradual increase in these requests plus the challenge of the scores of potential subjects likely to come up for consideration next session provide the library with a limitless supply of work during the interim period. While we are glad for the more leisurely pace possible during the next few months, we look forward to the excitement and the opportunity for service which the next session will bring.