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LOAN LIBRARIES.

THE need which every student feels of access to books of reference can so seldom be met by the purchase of a complete library, that the student is obliged either to forego the use of many needed books or to obtain such as loans from their possessors.

While great liberality is usually shown by book-owners in granting loans to deserving applicants, the lack of general information as to who are the owners of particular books prevents the student from being able to request their loan, and delicacy forbids a frequent repetition of such requests.

Access to a loan library organized for the supply of books of the character indicated would undoubtedly be welcomed by a large number of students, who would willingly pay a small fee for the use of the books. Such a library, however, would fail of its usefulness if it could not afford to grant the loan of its books for a small fee, and it could not, at any rate, depend upon fees for its support.

Its first requisite, the obtaining of the books, would necessitate some sort of expenditure, or the coöperation of authors in the presentation of their individual works.

Another requisite, the preparation and publication of a catalog of the books to be loaned, would also entail expense, for while the preparation of the catalog might be secured by gratuitous labor, the same would not be the case with its publication.

A last requisite and one the most difficult to fulfil, the care of the sending and receiving of books loaned, would involve an expenditure of time and labor for which the receipt of the slight fee charged for loans would be a quite inadequate compensation.

So far as these three requisites were fulfilled, the establishment of such a loan library as is contemplated would be a success; without this fulfilment, the desired end seems unattainable. The entomologists of this country have it in their power to decide how far such a plan of a library shall be carried out.

The Cambridge Entomological Club decided in February 1875, in connection with its other bibliographical undertakings, to offer the loan of books from its library generally to all the members of the Club and subscribers to PSYCHE, the distribution and return of the books to be effected through the mails. For this purpose it secured, by gratuitous labor, the preparation of a catalog of its possessions, which, however, from lack of funds, it has been unable to publish; the same circumstance obliged it to rely entirely upon donations and exchanges for the increase of its library. Generous donations, principally of so-called "separates," and numerous exchanges for PSYCHE have been received, and the few contributions of money to the Permanent Publication Fund have tended to enrich the library, so far as they have rendered possible the continued publication of PSYCHE, upon which the receipt of exchanges depends. The want of a catalog, the inability to purchase the numerous needed works which will not be presented, and the lack of means to employ assistance in the distribution and recovery of loans, have hindered the realization of the full benefits which may result from this undertaking.

B: P. M.



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