

*Morris L. Cohen**

As librarians perform many and varied roles, so inevitably do they develop and display similarly varied strengths and personal specialties. Some are known primarily as collectors, building great holdings for the libraries they serve. Others are efficient administrators, distinguished for their managerial skills. A few are bibliographers of note, engaged in the scholarship of recording and describing the literature of their field. Still others concentrate on teaching and counseling their readers in the methods and materials of research. There are also some who are recognized for their talents in designing and creating library buildings and facilities. Most library directors, over their careers, are engaged to some degree in all of these functions, but each particularly enjoys and becomes known for only one or two.

George A. Strait, who will be retiring this year from the faculty of The University of Iowa College of Law after a long and distinguished career in law librarianship at a number of law schools, has distinguished himself in all areas of his profession. His managerial effectiveness has been apparent in every post he has held. His bibliographic work on Dean Roscoe Pound was a permanent contribution to the study of that scholar. Teaching of research skills and service to readers were always a significant part of his librarianship. Professor Strait's major achievements, however, have been in the building of library collections and service programs. The Harvard Law School Library and the Social Law Library of Boston, being among the oldest of American law libraries, were already so developed that no current librarian could significantly affect their holdings. George Strait did, however, have an active role in maintaining and strengthening those collections.

Professor Strait's major building efforts were in developing from scratch library collections for the Northeastern and Antioch Law Schools, each within the amazingly brief period of two years. These achievements were preceded and followed by his work in designing new library facilities at Southern University Law School early in his career (1951-1953) and again at The University of Iowa College of Law near the end of his professional career in librarianship. The Iowa building is now in construction with completion projected for January 1986.

At Northeastern Law School, George Strait acquired at minimal cost a collection of sixty thousand volumes within twenty-five months, from 1967 to 1969. His herculean effort (which included the pioneering development of what was probably the first automated and computer-produced book catalog in a law library) enabled Northeastern to open and achieve accreditation with unprecedented speed. That feat was subsequently duplicated by Professor Strait, from 1972-1974, in the new, experimental

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law school created by Antioch College in Washington, D.C. Again, not only was a working collection assembled from the beginning, but physical facilities for the library were designed and set up, staff hired and trained, and library procedures established. The Antioch project also involved an unusual, innovative feature in collection development. In order to meet the school's special curriculum, Professor Strait developed a new collection of clinical legal materials.

In all of these important professional accomplishments, George Strait was always the pragmatist, successfully achieving what theory had indicated was impossible. Never one to be constrained by the book, he used his unique personal experience and contacts to do what others would need more time, more money, and more staff to do perhaps not as well. And wherever the frontiers of professional activity were stretching—to computerization, microforms, and networking—George Strait has always been in the front lines.

At the same time, George Strait served the larger communities in which he lived. His life was not library-bound, but reached beyond to the hard issues of civic concern and human justice. In Natick, Massachusetts, he served as Town Meeting member, Selectman, member of the Finance Committee, and member of Fair Housing, forerunner to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. In Iowa he continued to pay his community dues, serving on the Iowa City Council, Iowa State Arts Council, Iowa Historical Records Advisory Board, and Iowa Commission on Aging. Within the law library profession, needless to say, he has contributed to the leadership of several national and regional organizations and chaired many important committees.

Gabriel Naude, the great seventeenth century library builder, advised in establishing a library: "The men most to be believed in any matter are those who have given in themselves the ultimate example of it."¹ Clearly, the professional life and work of George A. Strait, Sr., have made him one of that number.

1. G. NAUDE, *ADVICE ON ESTABLISHING A LIBRARY* 11 (1950).