

DOCUMENTATION

# Documentation Congress Step Toward Making "World Brain"

## Paris World Meeting Sees Microfilm as Useful Tool In Libraries and For Publishing Unprinted Material

**E**NGAGED in beginning the creation of a "world brain," as H. G. Wells phrased it, representatives of 45 countries participated in the first World Congress of Universal Documentation in Paris, Aug. 16-21.

Librarians, scientists, editors and others who marshal and create the written record of civilization discussed in a medley of languages the methods and necessities of welding the intellectual resources of this planet into a unified system.

The nuclei of this world brain exist in the various great intellectual centers—the libraries, journals and indices of recorded knowledge—and the task considered is how to exchange and distribute more effectively the past, current and future accumulations in all fields of human endeavor.

Microfilming loomed large in the discussions as a new technique that will bring the libraries of the world to the desks of individuals or will allow many world locations to have and use the world's accumulations of records, literature and documents. This method consists of photographing manuscripts, illustrations, books and other documents upon motion picture film so that they occupy a mere hundredth or less of the area of the original. These miniature photographs or microfilms are magnified in order to read them.

### World System

One of the resolutions of the Congress urged the establishment of microfilm copying services in the libraries of the world so that a scholar or scientist of any country may obtain a microfilm of any of the material on file in all these storehouses of knowledge. Such a network of microfilm copying services has had its beginnings in America where libraries of Washington cooperate with Bibliofilm Service operated by the American Documentation Institute. Another resolution specifically suggested that microfilm should be used for making available the enormous manuscript and graphic material gathered by weather services.

With a view to broadening the world organization of documentation, the Congress asked the International Institute of Documentation, now a union of documentation centers, to transform itself into the International Federation of Organizations of Documentation. A permanent international committee of the new federation would be charged with organizing future congresses, and the next World Documentation Congress is scheduled for Frankfurt, Germany, in 1940.

### Resolutions Passed

Other resolutions of the Congress dealt with: The uniform preparation of articles for technical and scientific periodicals; the standardization of methods of classifying books and other documents; the preparation of union catalogs so that they may eventually be consolidated internationally; the indexing of daily newspapers; the building of bibliographies on cards; the gathering of literature upon documentation techniques; the development of cooperation between specialized organizations and libraries; extension of the work of the International Institute of Agriculture; the establishment of agencies in all countries for the distribution of their official documents; the printing and exchange of library cards.

Personalities, periodicals and libraries come together to build the network of documentation, the rudimentary "world brain," that promises to bridge between different geographical locations and between this generation and those succeeding.

First ideas or facts are recorded and published in some manner or other—in a newspaper, a scientific or scholarly journal, a letter or memorandum, a book or a microfilm.

Second, this growing mountain of the world's literature or documentation must be ordered, classified, indexed so that things can be found and used. This is the weakest link in the chain, despite the great catalogs, card files and many abstract journals.

Third, the world's documentation must be preserved and kept on file so that those who wish to use it can do

so. This is the task of libraries and documentation centers.

### Libraries Important

Libraries because of their size and physical presence are the most visible units in the documentary mechanism. They range from the great British Museum Library, the Bibliotheque Nationale, the Library of Congress, and the Berlin State Library down to the few shelves of books in a scholar's study.

Personalities create and operate the mechanisms that serve documentation. From its many phases came some 400 experts to attend the World Congress of Universal Documentation at Paris.

The president and organizer of the Congress was Dr. Jean Gerard, who presides over the *Maison de la Chimie* (House of Chemistry) which serves as a French and international center for chemical information.

In 1895 Paul Otlet began the world organization that is now the International Institute of Documentation. Today he is still youthful and enthusiastic though white-bearded, and he came from Brussels to be an honored and leading figure in the Congress.

The head of the German delegation, which numbered over 20, was Dr. H. Krüss, general director of the *Preussischen Staatsbibliothek* (Berlin State Library) whose fluency in idiomatic English and French aided international accord.

From England came H. G. Wells, the writer; Hilary Jenkinson, head of the British Foreign Office Archives; Dr. S. C. Bradford, director of the Science Museum Library, and other leaders.

Julien Cain, general administrator of France's National Library, was one of the leading hosts to the Congress, while Dr. Pierre Bourgeois, of the *Maison de la Chimie*, edited and translated the reports and discussions.

Dr. Alingh Prins, head of the Dutch Patent Office and president of the International Institute of Documentation, and Dr. Marcel Godet, director of the Swiss National Library and president of the International Committee of Libraries, represented important national and international affiliations.

### American Delegation

Americans in attendance represented many phases of documentation in the United States. Official delegates included: Dr. Worthington C. Ford, honorary European representative of the Library of Congress; Herman H. Fussler, head of the University of Chicago's microphotographic laboratory; Miss M. Alice Mat-

thews, librarian of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Miss Margery Quigley, librarian of the Montclair, N. J. Public Library; Miss Sabra M. Vought, librarian of the U. S. Office of Education; Prof. Douglas Waples, of the University of Chicago's Graduate Library School; Watson Davis, president of the American Documentation Insti-

tute and chairman of the delegation. Others attending the Congress included: Dr. R. H. Draeger, surgeon in the U. S. Navy; Dr. Atherton Seidell of the National Institute of Health; Dr. J. T. Vance of the Library of Congress; Prof. Carroll D. Champlin of Pennsylvania State College; and Miss Jose Meyer of the Library of Congress.

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## DOCUMENTATION

## Today's Distress and Horrors Basically Intellectual—Wells

“Race Brain” Can Now Be Duplicated and Preserved From Destruction; “Civilization is a Phoenix”

By H. G. WELLS

In an address before the World Congress of Universal Documentation, Paris

(Mr. Wells opened his address by explaining that he approached the work of the Congress from quite another angle than most of the other members. He acknowledged the admirable hospitality tendered the gathering and the energy and organizing power of Dr. Jean Gerard, president of the Congress, and his able associates. He said that he liked to think that he is a *precursor* of a growing appreciation of the necessity, importance and promise of the work of documentation by the outside world.)

I SAY I come in from quite another angle, whether I am an intruder or whether I am—as I like to think I am—a *precursor* of a growing appreciation of the necessity, importance and promise of your work by the outside world.

It is dawning upon us, we lay observers, that this growing work of documentation and bibliography, is in fact nothing less than the beginning of a world brain, a common world brain. What you are making, we realize, is a sort of cerebrum for humanity, a cerebral cortex, which, when it is completely developed, will constitute a memory and also a perception of current reality for the entire human race. This is exciting the imagination of some of us very greatly.

Plainly what is indicated is a unified and uniform organization.

### Same In All Lands

Knowledge is the same in all lands and countries.

As Mr. Watson Davis is here to re-

mind us, it need not now have any single local habitation. It need not have the vulnerability of physical material centralization because the continually increasing facilities of photography render reduplication of our indices and records continually easier and cheaper. In these days of destruction, violence and general insecurity, it is comforting to think that the brain of mankind, the race brain, can exist in numerous identical replicas throughout the world in Peru, Iceland, Wales, New Zealand, as well as here in Paris. Workers in any part of the world may contribute to the growth.

At first our activities are necessarily mainly receptive. We begin most easily with the documentation of concrete facts, but *ideas are also facts* and I do not see how this new and great encyclopedia, this race brain whose foundations you are laying, can fail to develop into

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## How Documentation Promotes Intellectual World Progress

By WATSON DAVIS

(The address of the head of the American Delegation to the World Congress of Universal Documentation, Paris.)

THROUGH the daily, flowing, unending stream of the written and pictorial record of all phases of life, the peoples of the world have their best op-

portunity of knowing each other as intellectually motivated communities striving to progress and make the world a better place in which to live.

anything but a mighty structure for the comparison, reconciliation and synthesis of common guiding ideas for the whole world. What is gathered will be digested and the results returned through the channels of education, literature and the press to every individual in the planetary community.

Please do not imagine that I am indulging in any fantasy when I talk of your work and your accumulations as the rudimentary framework of a world brain. It is either that or nothing.

### Mental Organization

I am speaking of a process of mental organization throughout the world which I believe to be as inevitable as anything can be in human affairs. All the distresses and horrors of the present time are fundamentally intellectual. The world has to pull its mind together, and this is the beginning of its efforts. Civilization is a Phoenix. It perishes in flames and even as it dies it is born again. This synthesis of knowledge upon which you are working is the necessary beginning of a new world.

It is good to be meeting here in Paris where the first encyclopedia of power was made. It would be impossible to overrate our debt to Diderot and his associates. It is good for the representatives from forty countries to be breathing the clear, comprehensive and systematic mental atmosphere of France, to be recreating themselves in the presence of its sympathetic constructive understanding.

Again I would thank our hosts for bringing this Congress together here and enabling a number of widely scattered workers to realize something of the true greatness of the task to which they have devoted themselves.

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portunity of knowing each other as intellectually motivated communities striving to progress and make the world a better place in which to live.

What a wide compass is included in this conception of “documentation.” Letters, periodicals, pamphlets, newspapers, books, business and official records, manuscripts, notebooks, motion pictures, radio transcriptions, phonograph records, photographs, drawings and paintings,