ASSOCIATION OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION BUREAUX

ANNUAL REPORT

THE Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux arranged to hold its sixteenth annual conference at University College, Nottingham, during September 15–18, 1939. Owing to the War, the meeting did not take place, but a report including the papers which were to have been presented together with the Council's report on the year's work of A.S.L.I.B. 1938–39 and a report of the fourteenth annual general meeting held on November 24, 1939, has now been issued*. The report indicates that the membership stands at 334 as against 325 in the previous year, and the financial position continues to restrict the activities of the Association. One hundred and eight translators are now registered, but this service is not nearly so widely used as it should be. At the annual meeting, the chairman emphasized that under war conditions the need for a clearing house for information is accentuated and the Council aims at keeping the work of the Association going as normally as possible.

Of particular interest to scientific workers are the papers dealing with "Thesis Literature" by Colonel Luxmoore Newcombe, of the National Central Library, Mr. Watson Davis and M. Julian Cain. Colonel Newcombe, dealing with the accessibility of British university thesis literature, emphasizes the need for more information about such theses, to which we have no adequate guide. The accessibility of theses for consultation or loan is discussed and some details are given of existing catalogues in university libraries and the collections of foreign theses in such libraries. Colonel Newcombe also discusses the feasibility of compiling and publishing a national guide to these theses, as well as the advisability of each university filing in its library two copies of each unpublished thesis accepted for any degree. The compilation of such a catalogue of unpublished theses in each university library, and the collection in one library, possibly the National Central Library, of copies of published foreign theses, which would be available for loan, also require consideration.

Mr. Watson Davis, in his paper dealing with the accessibility of the thesis literature of the United States, emphasizes the service which the American Documentation Institute is able to offer for obtaining American dissertations on microfilm in co-operation with the libraries and institutions concerned. M. Julian Cain's notes on thesis literature in France describe the centralization of such theses in the Library of the University of Paris (Sorbonne). A complete set is sent to each university library in France annually and to all foreign libraries participating in the exchange scheme.

A paper by G. S. Fulcher discusses the value of author's abstracts as an aid to documentation and advocates the extension of this system, preferably through some organization such as the International Federation of Documentation. Dr. L. A. Sayce contributes a paper on microphotography in 1939 in which he refers to the research work proceeding at King's College, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and the need for a central library, preferably in London, to take the lead in Britain by establishing a well-equipped micro-copying bureau.

Papers of more general interest are those in which Sir Harry Lindsay describes the work of the Imperial Institute as an information centre; Mr. Guy Pocock describes the libraries and information bureau of the British Broadcasting Corporation, and Mr. Thomas Baird discusses the cinema and the information services, in which he emphasizes the important educational work the cinema could render in wartime conditions, notably in evacuation problems.

* Report of the Proceedings of the Sixteenth Conference, organized to be held at Nottingham University College, September 15th to 18th, 1939. Pp. 92. (London: A.S.L.I.B., 1939.) 5s.

LEVEL MEASUREMENT AND CONTROL

AN important class of instruments among those required for scientific purposes as well as for the many accurate measurements which are now an essential feature in industrial and engineering undertakings is that which is designed for indicating, recording and controlling liquid levels. Many devices have been adopted for these purposes, one being the employment of compressed air which is arranged to be slowly discharged through an open tube the end of which is submerged in the liquid. As the head of liquid above the open end varies, so does the pressure of air, thus giving an indication of the level. Instruments of this type are suitable for almost any fluid and give single or multi-point readings, or they may be adapted for continuous records. Where the provision or use of an air supply presents difficulty or is undesirable for special reasons, depth indicators and level recorders may be of the self-contained pressure bulb type. The bulb is installed at the zero of the level to be measured and is connected by tubing to the instrument, which may be at any desired height above or below the liquid and at any reasonable distance from it.

For tanks the mercury column can be conveniently employed, and a precision type of instrument based on this principle is capable of an overall accuracy of 0·005 of an inch of mercury. Instruments for level and depth alarm or control are of pneumatic or electrical types and, at maximum or minimum or both, they operate bells, klaxon horns or pilot lights to give warning or regulate a diaphragm control valve so as to maintain any desired level. The

pneumatic principle can be applied also to measure the specific gravity of liquids of variable density by two standpipes connected to a differential pressure indicator or recorder. In a list recently issued, Messrs. Negretti and Zambra, who have wide experience in the manufacture of instruments of these types among many others, have supplemented the illustrations with accessory schedules and diagrams showing how the several models are employed and connected under different conditions of service. More than a catalogue, it is thus a handbook for the reference of those responsible for the selection and installation of level measuring instruments.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH IN WAR-TIME*

IN every war of which we have records the wastage from disease has outnumbered many times the losses from killed and wounded. Figures from the War of 1914–18 support this statement, as well as the experience of the Walcheren expedition and the Crimean campaign.

Military and civil authorities are both interested in the maintenance of the public health in war-time. Military and civilian health authorities successfully co-operated in this respect during the War of 1914–18, and similar arrangements have been made in the present war.

While indirect war consequences, such as alterations in diet, excess of work and worry and the pandemic of influenza (1918–19), contributed to increased rates of mortality among civilians in the War of 1914–18, the record of civil public health was good on the whole. The population increased and the infant mortality rate was lowered. It must be remembered that that War saw the beginnings of those personal health services which have done so much to improve the health of the community; for example, the School Medical Service (1907), the Insurance Medical Service (1912), the Tuberculosis, Maternity and Child Welfare and Venereal Disease Services. It is a harder task in the present War to maintain the health services at the high level they have reached. In addition, unprecedented demands have been made on the national health services. The central health authority has become a more important arm of defence, and has had to organize an emergency medical service, in itself a stupendous task, and an evacuation scheme for school children, expectant mothers young children and other priority classes of the population.

An account of the emergency medical service and of the medical problems of the evacuation scheme was also given.

Certain criticisms of the evacuation scheme were discussed. It was emphasized that the Public Health and School Medical Services should not be blamed for departures from the normal standards of cleanliness and conduct found in certain of the evacuees. The root cause of these conditions lies in the home. They mean that slum clearance has not yet gone far enough, that low standards of living still persist, and that the lessons taught in the school and clinic sometimes fail to reach the older generation.

It was suggested that the policy of preparing for casualties and of evacuation may have played no inconsiderable part in the present freedom of Great Britain from enemy air raids.

Reference was made to certain diseases—deficiency diseases, tuberculosis, venereal diseases, influenza, infectious diseases, cerebrospinal fever—which are the objects of special concern in this War. The civilian arm has yet to receive its baptism of fire. If that stern ordeal comes, it will endeavour to keep the flag of national health flying in the storm of war as zealously as it did in the sunshine of peace.

* Substance of a Chadwick Public Lecture delivered on February 20 by Sir Arthur MacNalty, K.C.B., Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health.

HAULAGE PRECAUTIONS IN MINES

OF the deaths caused by haulage accidents in mines, the fact that over a period of eight years nearly 25 per cent were due to runaway tubs is sufficiently serious to indicate this as a subject demanding inquiry. One of the lines of research undertaken in this connexion was to determine the relative degree of effectiveness of the different types of backstay which are used as one means of arresting potential runaways. The backstay, which is known by several local names, is a strong steel bar which trails along the rail track at the rear of the string of tubs, its function being to dig into the track if the train tends to run back. Frequently its action is ineffective, and this led to one line of research being directed by the Department of Mines towards ascertaining the chief causes of the failures and the ways and means of preventing them by improving the design of this simple safeguard. The results of this investigation have now been published under the title "Backstays for use in Mines" (Safety in Mines Research Board Paper No. 103. H.M. Stationery Office. 1*s*. net), which describes all the steps taken and results obtained and makes available to the coal mining industry the conclusions reached.

Representative types of backstays having been obtained from several coalfields, these were examined for variations in design. They were classified in four groups, the classification mainly depending on the method of attachment to the tub. In other respects very marked differences were noted; length varied from 23 to 42 inches and weight from 9¾ to 72 lb. They were subjected to a number of tests under conditions simulating those which might actually