

Summary.

Indications for the use of the different methods of anaesthesia, together with their limitations in cases of peripheral vascular disease are discussed. The technique of refrigeration anaesthesia is fully described.

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LITERARY SECTION

THE 1945 ASLIB CONFERENCE

Aslib (Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux, 52, Bloomsbury Street, W.C.1), born in 1924, celebrated its coming of age at a most successful annual conference, held under the Chairmanship of Sir Frederic Kenyon at Portland Hall on September 15 and 16, 1945. Having among its objects the co-ordination and systematic use of sources of knowledge and information in the arts, sciences, industry, and commerce, its activities include an annual meeting, the maintenance of an enquiry bureau and of a register of expert translators, and the publication of books, book-lists, and journals. The year 1944-45 was a memorable one in the history of Aslib, as for the first time the receipt of a Government grant marked official recognition of its work.

A REVOLUTIONARY PROPOSAL

The usual presidential address was replaced by a fascinating and provocative paper, "Information Service as an Essential in the Progress of Science," by J. D. Bernal, F.R.S., University Professor of Physics at Birkbeck College, which dealt primarily with the user's side of library service in relation to research. In the past, said the lecturer, the world of the scientific research worker and the world of the librarian had been too far apart. Old libraries were conceived as depositories of knowledge. The modern library should be a distributor and organiser of knowledge. While the annual increment of new knowledge in any particular field of science was rapidly growing, the capacity of the individual research worker for assimilating knowledge had already, in many cases, reached its limits. It was the librarian's duty not merely to accept material for his library, but to insist on its presentation in a form suitable for distribution. This meant a more intimate relationship between librarian and research worker and

between librarian and publisher, both of periodicals and of books.

The primary unit in scientific publication, according to Professor Bernal, was the scientific paper dealing comprehensively with a particular topic. Books could be considered as an accumulation of papers, and notes and letters as papers in embryo. The organisation of publication and recording should therefore centre on that of the scientific paper. In the lecturer's opinion the journal had ceased to be a satisfactory means of distributing scientific information. The majority of scientific journals were produced for learned societies, in the case of the smaller ones, principally for exchange purposes.

In Professor Bernal's proposed scheme each country would have a centre of scientific publication and exchange which would receive from societies' papers already passed by referees suitable for publication and lists of members to whom papers on specified subjects from any part of the world should be sent. These national centres would thus be clearing houses for scientific papers, arranging internal distribution and, at the same time, sending copies to clearing houses in other countries. Membership subscription to one society would entitle the subscriber to the services of the whole organisation, which, incidentally, could make a very good claim for government support. Papers would possess uniform format, so that they could be conveniently bound according to subject. A similar service could be organised for science abstracts, prepared once and for all by the author, verified by his own scientific society, and produced in a form suitable for modern filing systems. Similarly the scientific societies could make themselves responsible for the publication of monographs and textbooks, allowing freedom, however, for original work of an unorthodox kind.

In the absence of such a scheme, the speaker felt convinced, the literature of scientific research would soon be choked by its own productivity.

Professor Bernal's revolutionary proposal, which aims directly at supplying every scientific worker with his minimum requirements and indirectly at raising the standard of scientific literature, is certain to provoke heated discussion. Vested interests are at stake, and the voice of sentimentality will be heard in the land. For will this not mean the death of many old-established and familiar journals?

HOSPITAL LIBRARY ACCOMMODATION

Mr. C. E. A. Bedwell, formerly chairman of the Guild of Hospital Librarians, in his paper "Hospital Library Accommodation," rightly stressed that the library should be an integral part of hospital work, reading having a definite place in the rehabilitation of patients. At the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, the patients' library occupies a central position. "The spacious room, well lit, where patients' can browse around the shelves or sit down comfortably for a while, would put to shame the poky little hole without proper shelving or furniture which, by an abuse of the English language, is called a library in a great many hospitals here."

On the basis of the average size hospital of 800 to 1,000 beds the library quarters would require three rooms: one to contain the collection of about 5,000 books and microfilms with seating accommodation for some twenty patients at a time; an office for the library staff; and an annexe for

trolleys and microfilm projectors; possibly also a room for book repairing—an admirable form of occupational therapy for patients.

The contribution of the library to the welfare of patients in mental hospitals was a matter upon which the Board of Control had laid emphasis for some years. Mr. Bedwell mentioned that there was one type of hospital which was frequently left out of consideration, although reading would often be a relief to long hours of loneliness, and that was the fever hospital.

MICROFILM SERVICE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Mrs. Lucia Moholy, director of the Aslib Microfilm Service at the Victoria and Albert Museum, gave an interesting account of the U.S.A. type of microfilm projector which throws an image of a book on the ceiling for the convenience of a patient who is forbidden to sit up in bed. Once the film has been fitted into the projector by the librarian or the nurse, the patient can work the machine himself—with his hands, toes, heel, or slight movement of the head, depending upon the nature and extent of his disability. Pages can be turned backwards as well as forwards. The approximate cost of a projector will be 100 dollars, the service being operated by a non-profit organisation in which Aslib is to be represented. Whether, as was suggested in the discussion, this microfilm service will eventually be made available for healthy people addicted to reading in bed or whether its attractions would encourage the *malade imaginaire* are matters for speculation.

W. R. B.

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