

11-1986

**Bulletin of the Rhode Island Library Association v. 59, no. 11
(incorrect v. 60, no. 9 on newsletter)**

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Recommended Citation

RILA, "Bulletin of the Rhode Island Library Association v. 59, no. 11 (incorrect v. 60, no. 9 on newsletter)" (1986). *RILA Bulletin*. Book 159.

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Rhode Island Library Association Bulletin

Volume No. 60 No. 9

ISSN:0146-8685

November 1986

Access to Special Collections by Professor David C. Maslyn Head, Special Collections University of Rhode Island

Yea can't really get there from here. This is typical New England jargon for local directions from point A to point W. Often said in jest and with a certain twang, it seems to personify real life situations in these parts. The same expression can be applied to the location and use of special collections in Rhode Island. As they say in some circles, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. My point is this: our institutions have special collections, defined in differing ways; and, as special collection librarians, we are not aware of what is held by the other 125 libraries in the state. The problem is compounded even more if we add the 75 historical or related societies that have special collections. The extension of this avenue of fact is that, if most of these collections are not reported, how is there access? There really is a library A (Ashaway) and a library W (Woonsocket) with material they refer to as "special collections," but to traverse the territory poses some difficulty, actually more than some--it's almost impossible.

Even among those of us who give directions, (i.e. librarians), there is some confusion as to what constitutes a "special collection" and a "special library." Harrod's, Librarian's Glossary ..., 5th ed., 1984, definition is: (a) "Special Library is broadly one which is neither academic, commercial, national or public. It is intended to serve the needs of a portion of the community requiring detailed

information respecting a limited subject field; (b) A specialized or departmental collection within a library... A collection of books or other printed, graphic or recorded material dealing with a limited field of knowledge..." Special Collections is defined as a "collection of books connected with local history, celebrities, industries, etc., or on a certain subject or period, or gathered for some particular reason, in a library which is general in character." For my purposes, I have usually defined special collections as those materials kept by the library that are placed in a separate facility because of the unique character of the item(s) and are usually used under special restrictions. To this may be added the qualifier that, the item(s) may or may not be represented in the institution's public catalog, and if it does appear, the representation on the card may appear somewhat different than the standard book representation. So, we have a fork in the road and we must decide to veer toward special collections or special libraries.

Just this moment the phone rang with a question from the Head of Technical Services requesting the names of three of my special collections that I would like him to report on a survey form. The questionnaire from American Colleges and Universities, for its annual directory, has a small section on the institution's library. My response was Senator Pell's papers,

Records of the Episcopal Church of Rhode Island, and the Ezra Pound collection. Deja vu! This is the dilemma often confronted by libraries or the librarian when trying to answer questionnaires or trying to describe their holdings to the producers of guides. How much or how little do we report?

In my attempt to get there from here, I surveyed some typical, commonly used guides. The Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centers, 5th ed., 1979, lists 69 libraries in Rhode Island. There is no information on their holdings. Another road was the American Library Directory, 38th ed., 1985. The libraries are designated by type, (P-public, C-college, S-special/industrial, R-religious, etc.). Within each entry are the specific categories "subject interest" and "special collections." Of the one hundred and twenty-five Rhode Island libraries reporting to this Directory, 60 listed special collections and 68 listed subject interests. Institutions reporting in one category did not necessarily report in the other. Most of the 69 "special libraries" were represented in the Directory. There are then at least 60 libraries in Rhode Island with declared special collections, which may or may not be special libraries and there are also 68 libraries with declared subject interests which may or may not be special collections.

Under the notation "Special Collections," library A, Ashaway Free Library, reports: Chariho Times, complete edition. This is followed by (Block) Island Free Library, reporting: Natural History Collection. West Warwick Public Library System lists: Rhode Island; West Warwick; Science Fiction; Exceptional/Children Collections. This is followed by the last of the 125 libraries, Library W, Woonsocket Harris Public Library, listing: French Language Collections; Career Collection, United States Documents Department. Listed somewhere between were interesting special collections on printing, checkers, postcards, manuscript collection, stamps, Whitman, whaling, occult, magic, oyster bed records, cookbooks, pet collection, civil service test books, Italy and Italian Americans, and medicine for laymen. There is no indication in the entry to rank the collection as a major or minor resource.

Take for example, Newport College, Salve Regina Library, which reports: Jewish Holocaust (Dora and Elias Blumen Library for the Study of Holocaust Literature). This came as a surprise to me, so I called and

inquired about its provenance and use. It is an exceptional collection, given to the library along with funds for acquisition and heavily used for research. Midway through the state is Rhode Island College which I know has a good Special Collections Department containing rare books, personal papers, and archives. Yet, the entry under Rhode Island College, James P. Adams Library, does not list the department or its collections; rather, special collections are reported as "Children's Literature (Amy Thompson Collection), US Documents Department". Newport Historical Society Library lists no special collections, but lists subject interests areas of collecting. North Kingstown Free Library lists neither special collections nor subject interests, yet this omission is far from fact based upon my knowledge of their collection and the fine exhibits and programs presented in the library. This is not to say that all avenues are dead ends. Providence College, Phillips Memorial Library, has a main entry for its entire library in 12 lines and the 19 lines following list its special collections.

As this was really getting me no place, I tried a short cut and went by way of Ash's Subject Collections: a guide to special book collections and subject emphases as reported by university, college, public, and special libraries and museums..., 6th ed., 1985. Looking under "Holocaust-Jewish," seven states with their respective institutions reported collections; no collections were reported from Rhode Island. Trying other subjects--"Whales & Whaling," 18 states including Rhode Island (Brown and Providence Public Library); "Whitman, Walt," 31 states including Rhode Island (Brown); "Science Fiction," 46 states including Rhode Island (Brown). Lest you think of me as an iconoclast, our excellent Whitman collection is not reported in Ash's guide.

Next I tried the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, a Library of Congress guide to collections of manuscripts, personal papers, business records, and archives. From 1959 to 1984 only 14 institutions have reported their holdings, some reporting more than one collection over these many years. From 1980-84 six reports; 1970-79 six reports; 1959-69 seven reports. Admittedly, LC is backlogged with reports not yet published; but there are literally thousands of linear feet of original manuscript material in

institutions in Rhode Island. Interestingly, in this search under the 73 subject entries for Rhode Island was "Rhode Island Exodus." The entry in the guide under this subject read "Simister, Florence Parker, 1913--Papers, ca. 1957-1973, ca. 4 ft. (7 boxes), in University of Southern Mississippi, Lena Y. de Grummond collection of Children's Literature (Hattiesburg) gift 1967-73."

As they say, in some circles, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. The line is not at all straight in special collections, either through their definition, in their description, and the points of access for their use. There is quite a distance between our holdings and their use. Others are giving directions and pointing out differing ways, i.e. OCLC, RLIN, CLSI, on-line catalogs, systems, and networks. We have not even established bridges or communication among ourselves. The time has come for special collection librarians to find the way to get from the "here" now to the "there" of the near future.

NORMAN DESMARAIS RECEIVES GRANT

Norman Desmarais received a RILA Continuing Education grant to attend the Optical Publishing '86 Conference in New York October 15-17. The program will cover applications and issues for optical publishing and systems design and selection criteria as well as implementation issues and trends for the optical information industry. Mr. Desmarais expects to use the information in his program at the November RILA Conference (Guttenberg Goes to Bits) and in articles he plans to write.

REMINDER !

RILA membership dues

for 1987 year

due January 1.

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notice in the mail !

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The Rhode Island Library Association has established a minimum recommended salary of \$18,250 for a full-time beginning librarian in 1986.

SUBSTITUTE LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST: Woonsocket Public School System. Must be certified as Teacher of Library Science by the Rhode Island Department of Education. Salary \$40 per day. Application available from: Louis R. Leveillee, Coordinator of Media Services, 108 High Street, Woonsocket, RI 02895 (401) 762-4440.

GIFTS AND COLLECTION MAINTENANCE LIBRARIAN: Responsible for the management of material received by gift and for activities concerned with collection maintenance (preservation). Requirements: MLS degree from an ALA accredited library school; broad liberal arts academic background; reading knowledge of at least one foreign language; previous experience in academic libraries and/or book trade preferred; familiarity with special collections desired; supervisory experience desired. Hiring range: \$21,000-\$24,200, based upon experience. Interested candidates should send letter of application, resume and names of three references to Norma Beach, Personnel Office, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912. In order to insure consideration, applications should be received by December 31, 1986. Brown University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

ORDER LIBRARIAN: Responsible for the overall management of processes related to the ordering and receiving of monographic library materials, and for assisting with the management of the Acquisitions Department. Requirements: MLS degree from an ALA accredited library school; reading knowledge of at least one foreign language; three years of technical services experience in an academic library, including acquisitions and bibliographic searching; experience with library or business automated systems and networks; supervisory experience desired. Hiring range: \$24,200-\$28,600, based upon experience. Interested candidates should send letter of application, resume and names of three references to Norma Beach, Personnel Office, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912. In order to insure consideration, applications should be received by December 31, 1986. Brown University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

CONSERVATION MANAGER: Part-time. Small workshop already established. Must be creative and flexible, and have knowledge of and commitment to conservation of library materials. Seek articulate spokesperson for the cause, as well as someone who works well with a variety of people. You will find a stimulating and educational environment. Contact Sally Duplax at the Providence Athenaeum (401) 421-6970.

SCHOOL LIBRARIAN: Rhode Island Training School. Salary \$15,062 to \$24,239. Many benefits. Call 457-4844 or send resume to: Personnel Office, Department for Children and their Families, 610 Mount Pleasant Avenue, Building #8, Providence, RI 02908. An equal opportunity employer.

LIBRARIAN (STAFF): Professional entry level position whose duties are varied and include some children's services; 18 hours per week, which includes one evening. Possibility of promotion and expanded hours in the future. Must have MLS. Salary range: \$6,552-\$7,200, depending on experience. Send cover letter and resume to: Christopher LaRoux, Director, Greenville Public Library, 573 Putnam Pike, Greenville, RI 02808. EEOC.

calendar

NOVEMBER 13 - Young Adult Round Table, "On Your Own," East Greenwich Public Library, 9:30 AM.

NOVEMBER 16-18 - RILA Annual Conference, Marriott Inn, Providence.

DECEMBER 17 - Young Adult Round Table, "Current Fiction," Cranston High School East, 3 PM.

The RILA Executive Board accepted the report of the RILA Ad hoc Committee on Fees. The Executive Board endorses the majority report.

RILA Ad hoc Committee on Fees
September 1986

MAJORITY REPORT

Our society should be organized to increase human life chances and any restriction, either by lack of access, public or personal apathy, illiteracy, censorship or charging reduces the freedom of the individual and his potential for informed, responsible action. Freedom of access to information and ideas and the culture should be regarded as a right in a mature society.

In light of the long tradition of "free" library services in publicly-supported institutions, the question as to which materials and services ought to be free should be answered by applying the basic purpose of the library-- which is to provide information to the public on an equal basis, regardless of content or format.

The purpose of the public library is to provide diverse and easily accessible materials, services and programs in an atmosphere which encourages the free flow of ideas to educate, inform, enrich and entertain the citizens of the community. The public library serves all people without regard for age or sex, religious or ethnic background, educational ability, or economic status. It provides equal access to resources for all, without question of user purpose; it makes available the broadest spectrum of thought to a citizenry whose privacy it aggressively defends.

We recognize a distinction between charging for services which provide a convenience and charging for information (or information-bearing materials) itself. For example, charging for photocopying is permissible as it saves time for an individual, but does not otherwise deny access to information. On the other hand, charging a rental or use fee for video cassettes or other material not otherwise available for use is a restriction on access to information, and we oppose such restrictions. The format in which information is packaged is irrelevant, and policy based

upon format should be opposed.

We believe that fees for information are discriminatory; that they are a form of double taxation; that they threaten local tax support bases in favor of revenue-generating services (which by definition exclude some sectors of the public). When there are political or economic problems attendant upon a library's ability to provide materials or services, we feel that alternative means of funding should be sought, or a reordering of priorities effected. Any attempt to judge the worth of the content of information to an individual, or to question a user's purpose, should be vigorously opposed, and not allowed to be a factor in the free-versus-fee issue.

We conclude that it should continue to be the aim of publicly-supported libraries to provide information to the public without charge, with the conviction that the importance of free and equal access to information outweighs all other factors, and that it should be regarded as a public right.

In conjunction with this report, we recommend to the Rhode Island Library Association that the opinion rendered by the Attorney General on March 3, 1986, in regard to the propriety of charging rental fees to library cardholders for the use of video cassettes by free public libraries be respected.

We further recommend that future policy decisions regarding the free-versus-fee issue not be addressed on a case-by-case issue, but addressed in its collective whole.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Brennan
Ruth Corkill
John Fox Cory
Jonathan Tryon

¹John Smith, "A Conflict of Values-- Charging in the Publicly Funded Library," Journal of Librarianship 13 (January 1981): 6.

²Rhode Island Department of State Library Services, Minimum Standards for R.I. Public Libraries (Providence: DSLS, 1983), p.5.

Public libraries have always provided a variety of services at no charge. In recent years the variety of materials and services has multiplied and demands from the public for these new materials has intensified. With no corresponding increase in library budgets it has become a necessity to either charge for new services or not provide them at all; or, if provided, such provision is of necessity inferior service in quantity and quality.

With new technologies appearing on a regular basis, the only way to satisfy public demand is a nominal fee for new extras to cover expenses only. Public library patrons prefer to pay for adequate service rather than not have the service provided. They understand the need of a nominal fee for new recreational and informational materials. If the public library is to survive in this expansion of technologies, it must strive to serve the public adequately with the services they demand and have a right to expect. Therefore we believe that charging for video cassettes or online information services is the only viable alternative to the extinction of the public library as a useful, essential institution.

In conjunction with this report, we recommend to RILA that it seek appropriate change in or reinterpretation of the legislation attendant upon the issue.

Respectfully submitted,

James Arenburgh
Ellen Spilka

As I sit at my desk composing my last letter to the membership as President, it amazes me that my term has passed so quickly. I have learned a great deal from my experience as President and want to thank everyone who made my term possible by voting for me.

Being President of RILA has affirmed my belief in a few facts about our members. There are people in our organization who are willing to take on the responsibility of the offices of the Association and make a conscious effort to do a good job for all of us.

*There are people in our organization who will take on the responsibility of chairing our committees and, often single-handedly, carry out the charges to those committees.

*There are people who will serve on the committees of our Association and keep up the momentum that their colleagues began.

*There are TOO FEW of these people.

If this Association is to continue with its objective "to promote library and information services...and to encourage interest in libraries, information centers, and librarianship", then many more people are going to have to agree to accept positions as chairs of committees, serve on those committees, run for office, and keep the Association moving forward. I want to encourage everyone, particularly our newest members, to investigate the opportunities that are available for you on our committees. It's a lot of fun, as well as work, and it's a wonderful way to get to know your colleagues and to understand the library world of Rhode Island better.

I want to acknowledge the fine work of all of our committees in the last year and extend my thanks to everyone who has helped with the work of the Association in any way during 1986.

I'm looking forward to the future of RILA, and extend my best wishes to Jon Tryon, our incoming President, for a successful term.

Sincerely,

Roberta A.E. Cairns

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

RILA will hold another raffle at the Conference to raise funds for the Continuing Education Grant. Norman Desmarais and Donna Roberts were awarded grants this year.

Roberta announced that the theme for National Library Week will be "Take time to read; use your library." Grolier gives a \$1,000 grant for NLW public relations. Perhaps RILA should apply for this grant.

Roberta suggested that we have some kind of interest check-off on membership forms/renewal forms which might show where sections could be started. Roberta also suggested having a membership card. These cards can be useful for registering at other state conferences in the region.

The Executive Board accepted the report of the Task Force on Library Lending. The report contained both a majority and a minority report. The Executive Board endorsed the majority report.

RILA still needs a chair for the Government Relations Committee. If anyone is interested in this committee please contact Roberta Cairns at the East Providence Public Library.

There has been some negative feedback regarding the lack of "news" and the quality of the feature articles in the Bulletin. The Publications Committee will submit a survey to be included in the Conference packet asking for feedback about the Bulletin.

Judy Bell moved that a notice for nominations for a Special Recognition Award be placed in the RILA Bulletin, criteria for such an award to be cribbed from the Library Commissioners Award (for a civic group, association, which has supported libraries). The motion was passed. Look for details in future Bulletins.

Peter Fuller is drafting guidelines for a "Trustee of the Year Award."

The Executive Board agreed with one dissenting vote to send a letter to the Governor expressing our concern regarding funding for the Providence Public Library. As the Principle Public Library for the state they need state funding to provide services for all citizens. According to the Providence Public Library, funding is currently not sufficient to provide these services and the library has had to close on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

NELA is considering changing their conference from September to November. They would like to know how RILA feels about this. We will get back to them after some discussion.

bulletin board

- Providence College has automated its acquisitions department with the purchase of the Bib-Base/ACQ. The system interfaces with OCLC to download bibliographic records which serve as the basis of purchase orders, which are produced in eight and one-half by eleven inch or three by five inch format. It expedites the production and processing of orders and improves control over long outstanding orders. The system also maintains financial records for encumbrances, expenditures, and available balances and can provide bibliographies, acquisitions lists, and a variety of reports.

- The Providence Athenaeum, 251 Benefit Street in Providence, will hold a noteworthy book and print sale on Saturday, November 8th from 10 AM to 4 PM. The sale is open to the public and is well-known in antiquarian circles for surfacing some extraordinary finds in the rare book and prints fields, as well as some ordinary titles and images at exceptionally low prices.

- The Melvil Dewey Medal Award Jury is currently accepting nominations. An engraved medal and citation is presented annually to an individual or a group for recent creative professional achievement of a high order, particularly in those fields in which Melvil Dewey was actively interested, notably: library management, library training, cataloging and classification, and the tools and techniques of librarianship. Nominations and support documentation should be sent by December 2nd to: Kathleen Imhoff, Broward County Main Library, 100 South Andrews Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33301.

- The Jamestown Philomenian Library recently changed its telephone exchange to 423-BOOK.

- Coventry Public Library has been awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Education in the amount of \$8,535 to purchase materials and equipment for the library's literacy program.

MARGARET MARYOTT

Margaret Maryott, Branch Librarian at the Rumford Branch of the East Providence Public Library, passed away this past June. Her over 50 years work in libraries was truly a labor of love, a fact that never was lost on her patrons and library colleagues. No more fitting tribute to this remarkable woman can be printed in these pages than an unsolicited letter sent to Robert S. Alvarez, publisher of the Library Administrator's Digest. The letter, printed in the June 1986 issue, is as follows:

I want to tell you about a delightful library I've been going to. It's remarkable in that it's run by a woman, Margaret Maryott, who is not a 'professional librarian.' Somehow by the grace of God she was grandfathered into being the head of the Rumford Branch of the East Providence Public Library. Margaret's tiny little branch library is 5 minutes down the road from us, so we started going there. We've become more than satisfied customers! Margaret's building is small, her collection comprises little more than popular reading, but oh the service! We love going there.

Let me tell you why. One day I was browsing through the shelves and I overheard a telling phone conversation. As I listened, I heard one of Margaret's assistants talking to a patron who needed some reading material. I heard the assistant tell the patron that she would pull some books (in line with the description the patron had clearly given), and would meet the patron at a specified time in the library's parking lot at which time they would exchange books being returned and books being charged out. I was fascinated, Bob, so I asked the assistant what was up and was told that they have several patrons who are elderly and can't make it into the library. So the library staff are used to knowing the reading habits of these people and are used to meeting them in the parking lot with a bag of books they might enjoy. Having a Mother who doesn't go to the library because she can't physically make it into the building, I was so impressed! If only my mother had such library service, she'd think she'd died and gone to heaven. My mother can get to her car, and drive up and down the streets, but she absolutely cannot walk across a parking lot or even manage wandering through a library building. And yet she has the potential of being one of the best users of a library - she's always been a reader and loves to read.

I could give you pages of other examples of why I have fallen in love with this library. One of the reasons is Margaret's commitment to the fact that public libraries have books in their collection so they can be used by the public. I went to her library a couple of weeks ago and announced that I had been thinking of writing a children's book, but needed to take a look at some of the best (and most popular today) material already published for kids. Well, Bob, Margaret took me to her children's room and spent an hour pulling out book after book after book to show me examples of classics, what was currently popular that she liked, what was currently popular that she didn't like, what was outstanding for its illustrative appeal, etc, etc. She tore the children's room apart! I found myself seated at a table surrounded on all sides by examples of this and that of children's literature. After I selected a huge pile of books to take home and made up an enormous list of books I wanted to look at later on, I said that I felt embarrassed by the mess we had made of her children's room and offered to help her reshelve the books. Do you know what she said? She said, "Please, no. That's what we're here for. Why else would we have books other than for people like you who could feel free to enjoy them?" (I left the Rumford Library that day not only feeling good about librarianship, but about the whole world! You once said that what librarians always need is more customers, right? Well, my humble opinion is that if more libraries were run like the Rumford library, they would be inundated with customers. And public support. And public funding!")

people

JUDITH BELL, formerly of the South Kingstown Public Library, is now Director of the Jamestown Philomemian Library.

At Brown University, **WEN-KAI KUNG** has been appointed Curator of the East Asian Collection and **THOMAS McFADDEN** has been named Head, Reference Department.

At the Department of State Library Services (DSLS), **SHEILA CARLSON** has been appointed Acting Chief of the Division of Library Planning, Development, and Information Services and **ANDREW EGAN** has been appointed Acting Supervisor of Institutional Library Services.

MALINDA CARPENTER, former Librarian for the Blind at DSLS, is now Reference Coordinator/Collection Development Librarian at CCRI's Flanagan Campus library.

At Coventry Public Library, **SANDRA DUPREE** has been appointed Reference Librarian and **SHARON FREDETTE** is now Technical Services Librarian.

PATRICIA GORMAN, formerly of the Woonsocket Harris Public Library, has been named Children's Librarian at the Newport Public Library.

MARY MASSE recently assumed the position of Coordinator of Children's Services at the Pawtucket Public Library.

KAREN McGRATH, former Reference Librarian at the Providence Public Library is now Branch Librarian at the Auburn Branch of the Cranston Public Library.

DEBORAH O'HARA recently joined the staff of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum.

JOANN RYAN has been appointed Director of the Brownell Library in Little Compton.

VINCENT DEIGNAN, long time friend of libraries and husband of Margaret "Peg" Deignan, retired librarian, Providence Public Library Trustee and full-time library advocate, passed away in September.

The RILA BULLETIN is published 10 times per year by the Rhode Island Library Association. Managing Editor: Linda Walton, Butler Hospital, 345 Blackstone Blvd., Providence, RI 02906 (456-3869); Co-Feature Editor: Norman Desmarais, Providence College, Phillips Memorial Library, Providence, RI 02918 (865-2241); Co-Feature Editor: Tanya Trinkaus, Roger Williams College Library, Old Ferry Road, Bristol, RI 02809 (253-1040); News Editor: Frank Iacono, DSLS, 95 Davis Street, Providence, RI 02908 (277-2726); Technical Editors: Debra Cohen and Veronica Thomas, East Providence Public Library, 41 Grove Avenue, East Providence, RI 02914 (434-2453); Jobline: Charlotte Schoonover, Kingston Free Library, 1329 Kingstown Road, Kingston, RI 02881 (783-8254); Advertising: Deborah O'Hara, 157 Briarwood Avenue, Middletown, RI 02840. Subscriptions: Free to members; \$12/year in U.S.; \$20/year foreign. Deadlines: 1st of the month for features and 15th of the month for everything else. Features limited to four typed double-spaced pages and must be signed by author. Advertising: \$100 full page; \$50 half page; \$30 quarter page; \$10 business card size. Change of address: members contact the Membership Committee Chair and subscriptions contact the Managing Editor. Send claims to Managing Editor. For further information contact the appropriate Editor. Printing by East Side Copy, East Providence, RI (438-7878). Z673R52; LC 57-26438.

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