

Dean H. V. Gaskill
Division of Science
111 Beardshear Hall

Robert W. Orr
The Library

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I am returning herewith the request submitted by Dr. T. A. Bancroft for the construction of shelving in the Department of Statistics. Before commenting on Dr. Bancroft's request, I want to express my gratitude to you for your thoughtfulness in calling this matter to my attention inasmuch as it does indeed have serious and far-reaching implications.

With library facilities on this campus sinking into a progressive state of inadequacy over the past two decades or more, it is not to be wondered at that departments would react by attempting to develop their own library resources in their own quarters.

Many universities have decentralized library organizations which have long since developed to the point where the university library proper is little more than a liberal arts installation. This is a paradoxical situation. Increasingly, scientists need to move freely and quickly from the publications of one subject field to those in another; yet a decentralized library organization goes exactly in the opposite direction through artificial segregation of its resources into separate buildings and at inconvenient distances.

I am confident that a comfortable majority of staff members on this campus who are active library users would support any action the College might wish to take in the direction of preserving our centralized library organization, especially under conditions which could be expected to prevail following the construction of an addition to the library building.

If departmental library units are permitted to multiply and to grow unchecked, the time will come when the College will be asked to appropriate more and more funds for their support. Such a development could well adversely affect the level of financial support for the College Library itself.

Relative to Dr. Bancroft's request, I wish there were some way in which the proposed construction could be delayed pending a policy study of library development at Iowa State College. If there could be general agreement on the direction in which library development should take place in the future, then decisions such as the one called for by Dr. Bancroft's request could be made within the framework of a firmly-established and generally-known policy.

Sincerely yours,

Robert W. Orr
Director

RWO/mmg
Enc.

c: Dr. James H. Jensen