
The University Library of Dijon on the war front (14-18): continuity and American influence

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Forword

The University of Burgundy was founded belatedly in 1722 as a single faculty of Law. Closed during the Revolution, it was one of only twelve Law Schools reinstated by decree in 1804. Inaugurated in 1806, it was joined in 1808-1809 by a faculty of Arts, a faculty of Sciences, and a “*école spéciale de médecine et de pharmacie*” [special school of Medicine and Pharmacy]. Having originally been limited to a faculty of law, this aspect thus remained dominant for a long time, particularly in the collections of the university library.

During the First World War, Dijon was considered a “rear city”. Thanks to its geographical location, Dijon became a base for French and American military regiments, and a transit point for refugees and troops alike. The town was neither bombed nor directly attacked, and the university library did not have to evacuate its collections like those of the Bibliothèque Nationale or those of Amiens, nor suffer heavy destruction like those in Nancy, Verdun or Mézières. Although the activities of the library, like those of the entire institution, were greatly slowed down by the conflict, this period was an opportunity for the university to demonstrate its vitality, despite the difficulties, and to seize the opportunity for renewed scientific exchanges due to the populations passing through and the social changes brought about by mobilization.

A well-established university library

Under the French Law of July 10, 1896, the University of Dijon consisted of the University Library, the Preparatory School of Medicine and Pharmacy (rue de l'Hôpital)

and three faculties – Law (rue de l'École-de-droit), Sciences and Arts (rue Monge).

In an article published in 1963 to mark the inauguration of the University's new library on the Montmuzard campus outside the city center, librarian Odette Barthélémy points out that, as early as 1902, negotiations had been underway with the municipality to bring together the scattered collections of its faculties in a single library. The Law Library was located on rue du Petit-Potet, and the Sciences and Humanities Department on rue Monge. In addition, the independent library of the School of Medicine and Pharmacy was located on rue de l'Hôpital.

The library was moved to 38 rue Chabot-Charny and opened at the start of the 1907 academic year. At the time, it was a comprehensive library, common to all three faculties of the University, located close to the faculty of Law, the municipal library and the faculty of Arts building, which completed the complex in 1914. The building's potential for extension, combined with its heavy collection, would later justify the construction of a dedicated building on the new external campus, on Rector Bouchard's initiative.

In its new premises, the library was open every day (except public holidays) from 9:00 to 11:30 and from 14:00 to 17:30. The library was open to all students enrolled in one of the faculties or in the School of Medicine and Pharmacy, and also by special authorization from the Rector. In accordance with the University libraries' general regulations of August 23, 1879, books could be borrowed "outside" by students. The library was also able to offer "long-term" loans for academic work, and to request authorization from the Ministry for manuscript loans.

When the premises opened, the team consisted of three people who would remain in post for the duration of the war, all three being too old to serve at the front: a head librarian, a librarian and a clerk.

Louis Balland, born in 1856 in Haute-Saône, was in charge of the library when the war broke out, and was 58 at the time of mobilization. Initially assigned to the University of Dijon as sub-librarian in 1888, he was promoted to librarian at the University of Clermont, before returning to Dijon as head librarian in 1900. He remained there until his retirement.

Célestin Salingardes, born in Aveyron in 1864 (aged 50 at the time of mobilization), had several appointments before becoming librarian at the University of Dijon. Starting out as sub-librarian in 1889, at the Science University Library in Lyon, then at the École supérieure de pharmacie in Paris in 1893, he arrived in Dijon in 1895, where he was promoted to librarian in 1898. He applied for transfers to Bordeaux and then Rennes in 1918, but these were not granted – he himself testifies, in his discussions with the administration, to his awareness that the war situation could slow down administrative processes. He finally returned to his home region in February 1920 as a librarian in Bordeaux, where he ended his long career in 1930.

Finally, Pierre Adolphe Mathieu, born in 1855 in Côte-d'Or (aged 59 at the time of mobilization) was the library's clerk. He was assigned to the library in 1885, and remained there until his retirement in 1923.

In 1900, the library had less than 50,000 books, but already 36,000 theses and academic writings, and subscriptions to 212 French and foreign periodicals. With a budget of 27900 francs, including 8600 for staff, the bulk of the budget was allocated to acquisition, conservation and work expenses. To support this budget, enrolled students paid a registration fee, including a library fee of 2.5 francs, for at least the first decade of the twentieth century.

The French National Archives hold the library's budgets archives (AN F17/13522 for the years 1912-1915 and AN F17/13523 for 1916-1921). In there can be found the salaries of the three staff members, indicated anachronistically as “masse salariale” [payroll] in the table below, and the budget years (“fonctionnement” [operating fund] in the table). Amounts are in francs:

1912		1913	1914
Masse salariale (MS)	Fonctionnement (F)	MS [P] F [OF]	MS [P] F [OF]
[Payroll (P)]	[Operating fund (OF)]		
10 400	20 163	11 100 19 763	11 500 19 263
Total : 30 563		Total : 30 863 Total : 30 763	

Even before the war, the operating budget was decreasing due to the state's anticipating other priorities in the allocation of resources.

War's onset: holding back business

The war slowed but did not suspend the University's activity, even if the mobilization of all men aged between 20 and 40 disrupted it. Although it is difficult to determine exactly how many of the thousand or so students in the three faculties and the school were mobilized in 1913, we can imagine that, given the small number of female students and the small number of foreign students, the university community was greatly reduced. In addition, the age-group roll call complicated the curriculum, reduced enrolment and often meant an interruption of studies for those who had enrolled before the war.

In November 1914, there were merely 133 students at the faculty of Law; by 1916 there were only 40. The teaching staff, most of whom had passed the age of 40, remained at the disposal of the Government, and were given assignments in line with their skills, often outside of the university.

Faced with this reduced attendance and the sudden disorganization of teaching, the library's activities in terms of loans and receiving visitors were necessarily reduced.

From a financial point of view, the war effort applied to everyone, and the library budget was cut by around 20% in 1915, then by a further 30% from 1916 onwards.

1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
MS [P] F [OF]	MS [P] F [OF]	MS [P] F [OF]	MS [P] F [OF]	MS [P] F [OF]	MS [P] F [OF]
11 600 15 863	11 100 10 183	11 600 10 283	12 635 10 363	12 100 10 363	14 800 10 913
Total : 27 463		Total : 21 283		Total : 21 883	
				Total : 22 998	
				Total : 22 463	
				Total : 25 713	

Caption : MS [P] : masse salariale [payroll], F [OF] : fonctionnement [Operating Fund]

Expenditure items remained unchanged over the entire period. Heating, lighting, supplies and book binding remained perfectly stable before, during and after the war. Financial efforts therefore focused on book acquisitions and subscriptions, to the detriment of long-term collection building.

A check of the Dijon University Library's inventory registers from 1913 to 1920, now kept at the Droit-Lettres University Library, provides a fairly detailed estimate of the number of books acquired before, during and after the war.

Year	Number of additions to inventory
1913	184
1914	199
<i>Before the outbreak of war</i>	160
<i>After the outbreak of war</i>	39
1915	91
1916	48
1917	52
1918	77
1919	93
1920	133

Logically, the years 1916 to 1918 were the most difficult in terms of acquisitions, due to very low budgets and a shortage of paper, which slowed down editorial production.

The salaries of the three civil servants were maintained, and increased slightly as a result of public measures in favor of civil servants. In 1918 and 1919, “temporary supplements”, “exceptional wartime allowances” and “family allowances” were introduced to offset the rising cost of living, which increased sharply throughout the war years. Wage levels remained unchanged after the war.

On the whole, the library's activity was diminished but it kept on functioning, in the opinion of the head librarian. The annual report of one of the staff members, written by Balland on March 29, 1916, and countersigned by the University's Rector, states that he “n’a pas été appelé, vu son âge, à prendre une part active à la défense nationale, mais autant que le lui ont permis les nécessités du service, car depuis le début des hostilités la bibliothèque fonctionne comme en temps normal, il a prêté son concours aux divers œuvres de guerre existant à Dijon...” [has not been called upon, with regards to his age, to take an active part in national defense, but as far as the necessities of the service have allowed him, for since the beginning of hostilities the library has functioned as in normal times, he has lent his assistance to the various war charities existing in Dijon...].

The Americans' arrival: a resurgence of activity, Dijon's opportunity and specificity

In 1917, the Americans' arrival changed all that. The headquarters of the 78th Division moved to Semur-en-Auxois. Thanks to its railway station, Is-sur-Tille became home to an American base. The American presence in Côte-d'Or, which lasted until 1920, led to a change in social activities in Dijon. American Soldiers' Societies were set up, and Franco-American festivals and sporting events were organized; the contribution of American doctors was particularly significant.

As elsewhere in France, 260 American students were enrolled in 1919 at the University of Dijon, placed here under the military command of Captain Robb and the academic direction of Dean Bondurant. A specific course was given in French by professors from the University of Dijon before the students were allowed to enrol in the regular courses of the faculties and Medical Schools.

On the occasion of the inauguration, at the Théâtre de Dijon, of the Groupement des Américains de l'université de Dijon, on March 12, 1919, the Mayor of Dijon's reply to the letter from the dean of the American students – Alexander L. Bondurant, whose offices were located at 38 rue Chabot Charny, near the library – stated that American students would not find in Dijon “les splendeurs de vos opulentes universités des États-Unis” [the splendors of [their] opulent universities in the United States], but “si la maison dans laquelle vous allez entrer est petite, vous y trouverez de grands cœurs pour vous y recevoir (...)” [even if the house you are about to enter is small, you will find great hearts to welcome you (...)]. “Vacation courses” were purposely reopened for American students; before the war, they were mainly open to Italian, Serbian, Romanian and German students.

La Revue bourguignonne de l'enseignement supérieur, a quarterly journal founded in 1891, suspended publication in 1914 due to paper shortages, mobilization and the suspension of subsidies as a result of the war economy. This journal promotes and has promoted the research being carried out at the university, in all fields, and demonstrates the scientific interest of the work carried out at the University of Dijon, in all its components. In 1919, Ernest Champeaux, professor of History of Law, requested new subsidies to relaunch the journal, as he saw it as a reflection of Dijon's research activities and a means of promoting the University both locally and internationally. In his

request for subsidies, he drew the Rector's attention to the presence of American students and the benefits of encouraging them to settle in Dijon.

In the summer of 1919, however, the Americans left Dijon and expressed their friendship and gratitude to the people of Dijon and the Mayor of Dijon, as illustrated by the aforementioned invitation from the American division.

An American university was also set up in Beaune for American students mobilized in Dijon. In 1919, the American government decided to bring its mobilized students back to the rear and group them together to enable them to continue their studies at an American university. The plan was for 15,000 students to settle there, trained by American professors under the direction of John Erskine.

The creation of an American library...

Therefore, in Dijon and nowhere else, there were two American examples of student libraries in 1919: the small 2,000-volume library run by Miss Goddard at the YMCA Inn, 27 rue Sambin, for American students only. But more importantly, the A.E.F.U. (American Expeditionary Force University) library, set up in Beaune in record time with all the power of the American machine, which boasted 30,000 volumes and 90,000 loans... in just four months of operation.

The hospital facilities set up in Beaune in 1918 by the Americans were transformed, after the Armistice, for the benefit of the A.E.F.U., which was active from March until its official closure on June 7, 1919, just before the departure of the American troops. It was made up of twelve colleges and placed under the direction of John Erskine (1879-1951), Educational Director of the University, professor of English at Columbia University (New York) from 1909 to 1937 (for details of academic programs, see the Bulletins of the Headquarters American Expeditionary Force University, 1919; this official publication also lists the names of the 9571 students and 797 professionals registered at the American University). The library, managed by the ALA (American Library Association), was run by Luther L. Dickerson. With a staff of twenty-four, including six affiliated with the ALA, and occupying three buildings, it produced a remarkable activity report. In anticipation of the departure of the Americans, John Erskine, Luther Dickerson and Beaune mayor Jacques Vincent agreed that the municipality of Beaune would receive a thousand books on Memorial Day, May 30,

1919. The donation took on a symbolic and political character between the American and French authorities. Thus, contrary to what one might think, the collections of the American University Library were not transferred to the University of Dijon. In the 1920s, Dijon's professor of English literature, Georges Connes (1870 – 1974), tried unsuccessfully to obtain a share of the books. The institutions that now preserve these A.E.F.U. collections on behalf of the municipality are the Gaspard Monge City Library and the City Archives. The remaining 25,000 works probably passed through the ALA, and may have formed part of the collection of the American association's Parisian library, which was set up in Paris in 1920 and still exists today.

Until recently, university memory, including that of the library, gave an approximate account of this episode, claiming that it was these volumes, the fruit of the "Great History" of the Great War, that made up the John Erskine Library at the University of Dijon. Yet this is not the case. This Memorial Library is the achievement of a woman, his widow, Helen Worden Erskine, who successfully expressed and conveyed her wishes to the decision-makers, notably the Academy Rector, Marcel Bouchard, who followed the matter for several years. The library owes almost nothing to Erskine himself. It was built up between 1951 and 1954, when it was opened at the University of Dijon, thanks to Helen's vast network of friends and political contacts in the United States, especially in New York, as a former leading political journalist.

Although the A.E.F.U.'s collections did not transfer to the University of Dijon, the library's collections were nonetheless impacted by the Americans' stay. A number of American academic and government publications, notably official reports, enriched the collections from the end of the war onwards. In addition, a batch of books was donated to the University immediately after the First World War, bearing two explicit printed *ex-dono*, one general and figurative (War Service Library), the other circumstantial and date-stamped (1919). Yale University also made a direct donation to the University of Dijon, a little later, with similar motivations " ...in recognition of the sacrifices made by France... " which appear on the *ex-dono* pasted on the inside of each book. These are all useful elements to point out, since the context of provenance (donation, purchase) is rarely, if ever, mentioned in catalogs or studies. As a result, the collections mentioned here are not mentioned in the Institut des Amériques' white book entitled *Les Études sur les Amériques en France*, and in particular in chapter VIII, dedicated to documentary sources and resources. More generally, thanks to the donations register (

Registre des dons 1894-1945, unlisted, kept in the Bibliothèque universitaire Droit-Lettres, Dijon), we can observe within the collections the growing prominence of these publications, which goes hand in hand, perhaps, with the greater visibility of international organizations on the international political scene. There are other clues, such as the large consignment of publications from the League of Nations and the “Ligue des universitaires serbes” [League of Serbian Academics] documenting recent war events (call numbers 84532 et seq., 84276 et seq.), and from the European Center at 24 rue Pierre Curie in Paris (the future Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), on topics related to war and international law (85715 et seq.). One thing is certain: international politics have an impact on the University Library, its collections and its practices.

Conclusion

In 1923, the University opened its new campus on rue du docteur Maret. Recovering from the war, the University’s scientific activity gained new impetus. At the library, the previous rules, laid down in the 1879 general regulations for university libraries, were still in force. The 1923 student handbook reads: “L’université s’est remise courageusement au travail pour contribuer de toutes ses forces (...) à l’œuvre d’enseignement et de recherche dont l’université à la charge. Elle est fière de son passé ; elle y trouve ses raisons de confiance en l’avenir” [The University has bravely gone back to work to contribute with all its might (...) to the work of teaching and research for which the University is responsible. It is proud of its past it finds in it its reasons for its confidence in the future].

**Émilie Barthet, director of the common Service of Documentation of the
University of Burgundy**

**Rodolphe Leroy, curator in charge of the interdisciplinary heritage, archives and
culture mission at the documentation department of the University of Burgundy**

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