

the library *does* have limited resources. Given this restriction, the librarian or acquisitions specialist, in even the largest and most pecunious libraries, must make choices. These choices are rational only to the extent that the library collection maximizes the timely provision of requested documents to the satisfaction of the largest number of users.

In this light, A. Faser's letter² suggesting that a library is derelict in not purchasing a specialized journal of interest to only one user treats the occasional request with the same degree of importance as the on-going demand for the heavily used journals. An inventory policy in a department or food store, part-supply depot, manufacturing concern or library, based on ignoring frequency-of-demand distributions, leads to inefficient allocation of resources. Designers of sewer and flood control systems know they cannot design economic drainpipe and culvert systems of sufficient capacity to handle the runoff from the one-in-a-thousand chance that rainfall will exceed, say, 6 inches in any 1 h period. And mass merchandisers stock only a few or no items in the extremely low and high size ranges of shoes, hats and all attire in between.

Bradford's Law promulgates that a library can supply *most* of the requests for material with a relatively modest inventory of book and journal titles,

geared to the *normal* pattern of demand. This demand pattern is one in which a relatively few items from among all possible items in the inventory satisfy a majority of the actual transactions. Progressively fewer transactions are satisfied from the balance of the inventory, or from further augmentation of the number of titles held. Abiding by the Bradford distribution, then, is an important factor in the library's overall success at demand-fulfilment.

The most efficient way for a library to exploit its collection and maximize utilization of its document file is to share its bibliographic resources with as many patrons as possible. It cannot *reasonably* be expected to serve *every* individual request. Carried to the extreme, if the only requests were one-time requests, there could not be an *economic* central library. The most efficient way of handling such a situation would be for each individual to have his own private collection.

Yours faithfully,

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¹ Fairthorne, A., *J. Doc.*, 25, 319 (1969).

² Faser, A., *Nature*, 227, 101 (1970).