

*Special Collections in North American Libraries*

In the October instalment of this department, attention was called to a list of *Special Collections in Libraries of the Pacific Northwest* issued by the Pacific Northwest Library Association. Since that time a national list of special collections has been published under the title of *An Index Directory to Special Collections in North American Libraries*. The work was compiled by Dr. E. C. Richardson for the A.L.A. committee on bibliography and the Library of Congress as a part of the so-called A.L.A. plan for meeting the problem of American research books. The purpose of the compilation is set forth in the preface from which the following is drawn:

"The problem of American research books lies in the fact that the average largest libraries cannot furnish one-tenth of the books liable to be called for at any time by their special research clients. The waste of both research time and administration time, together with the high percentage of failure, in the present cumbersome method of trying to locate, by or for research students, books not to be found in the local library, led the A.L.A. committee to the conclusion that among the three or four urgent bibliographical problems of today the crucial matter from the library standpoint was the elimination of this wasted and ineffective effort by research students and reference librarians.

"The A.L.A. plan is based on the developing library experience of this matter during the past twenty years. It has been brought to a focus by the very great increase in research demand since the war. There is nothing specially new about it. It is merely a synthesis of library experience and expert opinion to date adjusted so as to produce at least a minimum solution, at a minimum cost, at the earliest possible moment. The prime object is to locate for the research student somewhere in America some copy of every book that he may want to use.

"The general solution is well recognized. It involves the union finding list for locating individual books and the list of special collections for locating groups of books."