At long last a publisher has come forward to collect, calendar, and microfilm the League of Nations documents and serials, an essential source collection not found complete in any one library, and in all libraries seriously depleted by the ravages of time, bad paper, loss, or inaccessibility through faulty organization of the collection. In the process of republication, Research Publications has preserved an important body of publications and created a new reference tool, League of Nations Documents 1919-1946; A Descriptive Guide and Key to the Microfilm Collection (hereinafter referred to as the RPI Guide).

The work of the League of Nations, an international organization most often remembered for its failure to keep world peace, included a broad range of activities, such as the welfare of women and children, suppression of drug traffic, supervision of mandatory powers, the collection of treaties, and the compilation of statistics, activities later continued by the United Nations. As a result, the league produced an enormous number of publications, among them the proceedings of the assembly and council, yearbooks, serials, and documents transmitting reports and communications from member governments.

During the years of its existence, the League of Nations had a world-wide depository system. It sold most of its publications, but although some titles became best-sellers, at no time were there more than 156 comprehensive subscriptions to the total sales output. Official libraries had the most complete collections, but confidential documents were circulated only to members, and some were not published other than in the original mimeographed edition.

Libraries that received league publications either by deposit or comprehensive subscription organized them in various ways. The most commonly used methods were full cataloging and integration of series and monographs with the regular book collection or employing the World Peace Foundation's "uniform plan for permanent binding," which consisted of binding the publications in groups by sales number, with the title and contents sheets supplied by the foundation.

Neither plan fared very well as a means of preserving the collection. Those organized by the first method suffered the typical fate of small paperbound publications scattered throughout a large book collection; sometimes actual physical loss, sometimes burial by the vagaries of author entries. Collections accorded the second treatment, which at least had the merit of keeping documents in one location, became dog-eared as a result of binding thin, legal-sized documents next to fat octavos, since the sales numbers seldom brought like serials together. All collections suffered from the poor quality of the paper used by the league, and most surviving documents are brown and brittle.

The RPI project for republication of the league documents should be evaluated for the content and arrangement of the microfilm collection and for the access provided by the publisher.

The scope of the project will cover the Official Journal, the principal serials such as the Treaty Series, the publications of the Permanent Mandates Commission, minutes of the directors' meetings, and the documents distributed to members of the assembly and the council.

The project will not include documents of the league's numerous conferences and commissions unless they were also distributed to members of the council or assembly and assigned an official number by that body. Documents assigned commission number only (e.g., El, OC, CTTE, GPE, etc.) were not microfilmed except for those reprinted in the Official Journal, scattered numbers in the serial portion of the project and the publications of the Permanent Mandates Commission. Serials

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omitted are periodical titles, such as the Weekly Epidemiological Reports, which from a retrospective viewpoint are less important than compilations covering a longer time span.

The English-language edition was used for the microfilm, except for documents published only in the French or bilingual edition.

The most important publication of the league was the Official Journal, which contains the meeting records of the principal bodies, the assembly and the council. The official proceedings of these bodies consisted of the Minutes of Council and the Records of the Assembly and its major committees. The Minutes were first published as a separate series: after 1920, they appeared in the Official Journal. The Records for the first three sessions were published separately, and in later sessions they were special supplements to the Official Journal. In the microfilm edition, each series is brought together in a separate sequence, preceded by the early issues in chronological order.

The indexes to the original edition were first published separately, later as special supplements to the Official Journal, and from 1929 as an integral part of the Journal. In the microfilm edition, sessional indexes appear in chronological order following the records of each session, the final reel is a composite of all annual indexes to the Official Journal filmed in consecutive order.

Special supplements—minutes of committees or material covering a particular topic, such as the Italian-Ethiopian conflict—are inserted in order by the supplement number within the assembly meeting record sequence, except for supplements that are annual indexes to the Official Journal.

The Official Journal, its supplement, and the meeting records prior to 1920 are filmed in a series of sixty-three reels, of which the last is the index. The reels of microfilm are marked with the project title, inclusive dates, series, and the beginning date of the reel. Boxes are labeled with the project title, series, and the dates covered.

The ten principal league serials, such as the Statistical Yearbook and the Treaty Series, selected for initial republication in the microfilm collection are arranged first by title and then in chronological order. Some of the series are self-indexed. When titles indicate content, there is no need for further listing; however, where titles vary, such as Money and Banking (category IV), it is difficult to determine exactly what is included on a particular reel. Boxes for the Treaty Series are labeled with volume numbers but not dates. It would be desirable for the publishers to add to the RPI GUIDE content lists for each reel of the serials.

The documents of the Permanent Mandates Commission (designated CPM), are the only commission publications microfilmed as a separate group. Strictly speaking, they are not league publications, although they were sold by league agents and accorded official recognition. Except for the 1924 reports, published by the League of Nations, the reports were issued under the imprints of the seven mandatory powers. For example, the British reports were published by the Stationary Office either in the Colonial Office series or as Command Papers. In the microfilm edition, the reports are arranged alphabetically by the names of the countries supervised. The microfilm boxes are labeled with the name of the individual countries but not the dates covered by each reel.

The editors of the project have conveniently preceded each group of reports with the text of the mandate as published in the council documents or other source and have also included other pertinent documents, such as land transfer regulations, and have inserted these chronologically within the sequence of annual reports.

The Minutes of the Directors Meetings have been filmed for the years 1919–1933; no further years have been located.

The section of the project which exacted the most effort from the editors was the subject documents, since a completely new arrangement was adopted. The subject groups established by the league consisted of thirteen categories identified by Roman numerals; four were further subdivided by sections A and B and also a “General Questions” category, making eighteen categories in all. Before the
microfilming, documents with official numbers in the A, C, and CL series, which in an archival arrangement would be treated as separate groups by provenance, were sorted by the league subject categories and then arranged by year of issue and alphanumeric order. The sorting brought to the attention of the editors numerous errors in the original subject classification, mistakes in the printing of the numbers, numbers inadvertently used twice for different documents, and documents with incomplete numbers or no number, which had to be resolved and changes indicated. Editorial changes numbers are listed in the indexes under both old and new numbers. Because of these changes and additions, it is almost essential to use the new RPI Guide described below to locate material in the microfilm edition.

More than 23,000 "official number" documents in the A, C, and CL series are included in the project. A number of the documents are the first versions of documents later printed in revised form in the Official Journal, and some were issued only in the mimeographed edition. Some documents were circulated to members of the assembly and council and hence received both A and C official numbers.

The sequence within the microfilm is sometimes confusing to follow, partly because of the omission of numbers filmed under the other subject categories and also because of the league practice of including documents within other documents or as attachments to them—for example, the text of an agreement transmitted by a letter from the secretariat. This problem should be attributed to the complexity of the material and not necessarily to the arrangement of the microfilm.

From the viewpoint of the librarian who must locate a single document, an archival arrangement by official distribution number would be preferred. For the scholar who must consult a number of documents in pursuit of his research, the new arrangement will enable him to follow his subject with a minimum of red tape.

Before a library discards its present holdings of hard copy, however worn, it would be well to determine if the material has been included in the RPI project—something not always easy to do. Collections bound with the World Peace Foundation title pages and content sheets contain sales publications, both with and without official numbers, and not all are included in the RPI project. Individual documents must be checked with the master index one by one. Boxes are labeled with the project title, subject category name and symbol and reel number.

Common approaches to the league documents include the internal indexes of the Official Journal, Treaty Series and other serials, the official sales catalogs, and the Marie J. Carroll Key to the League of Nations Documents Placed on Public Sale and its four supplements. There are also two major guides: the A.C. de Brycha-Vauchier Sources of Information: A Handbook on the Publications of the League of Nations (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939) and a retrospective work, Hans Aufright's Guide to the League of Nations Publications (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951). All have their own features; none can be used to the exclusion of the others.

Publications listed in the Keys are arranged in sales number order and are indexed by number and subject. The subject index for the basic volume covering 1920–1929 was published in the first supplement, and subsequent indexes were included within each additional supplement, the last covering the year 1936. The Keys, however, do not bring series together, and an attempt to trace successive parts may require reference to separate entries to locate official numbers for each number of the series. This difficulty is partly overcome by using the subject indexes to the sales catalogs, particularly the one in the basic catalog, which covers the years 1920–1935.

Both the sales catalogs and the Keys have been microfilmed as the first reel of the subject documents group, immediately preceding category 1A, Administrative Commission.

The Aufright guide, which to a considerable extent replaces the earlier and less detailed Brecha-Vauchier handbook, includes references to the major serials but cites only the
first and last numbers of a series. This feature, of course, is extremely useful for establishing dates in preparation for further search.

All of the above tools are oriented almost exclusively to the sales publications, and some do not cover the complete span of the League of Nations years. To find a document published as part of or attached to another document, it is usually best to consult the first-named source, the internal indexes to the Official Journal. The annual indexes to the Official Journal include both a subject and a numerical index, but because the latter is further subdivided by subject, it is less easy to use than an index arranged in one numerical sequence.

Because the existing guides to the League of Nations publications apply mainly to sales publications, it was necessary for the publishers of the microfilm edition to plan a completely new bibliographic tool: League of Nations Documents, 1919-1946; A Descriptive Guide and Key to the Microfilm Collection. This work will ultimately consist of three volumes, the first covering subject categories I to IV, the second to include categories V-VII, as well as early classification numbers for the years 1919-1920 and those for the Permanent Mandates Commission. The final volume, scheduled to be published in 1974, will include the remaining subject categories VII-XIII, the "General Questions" category, and a master list of all document numbers included in the collection. The latter will be eagerly awaited by all documents librarians because official numbers will be arranged in a single sequence for each year, irrespective of subject categories.

In compiling the master list, the publishers have attempted to track down every official number in the A, C, CL, and CPM series, a difficult task because some numbers were assigned and then not used or appear only as revisions of documents for which no record can be found in the U.N. libraries in New York City or Geneva.

Each volume of the RPI Guide consists of two parts, the first a calendar of documents in the order in which they appear on the microfilm, by the broad subject categories of the L.N. sales number (IA Administrative Commission, IB Minorities, etc.) and within each category by year and alphanumeric sequence. Reel numbers are indicated at the head of each group or inserted within the groups when materials included extend beyond a single reel.

Each entry consists of the official number, year, and category; for example, CL 19.1928 IV indicates that the publication is a Circular Letter, the 19th distributed to members in 1928, and that it belongs in subject category IV, Social Questions. This number is followed by the date of publication, subject title, and a brief description of the contents. Since many documents did not have titles, the editors, in calendaring the documents, frequently had to read the text and assign a title indicating the actual contents. Since many League documents are short and unpagged, the editors have sometimes added the notation "lengthy," "extensive," or "very extensive." If the text of the publication is in French, this fact is noted. Place of publication is assumed to be Geneva unless otherwise indicated. The entries do not indicate sales number beyond the Roman numeral subject category nor alternate numbers for documents issued in more than one series; however, when a number has been editorially shifted from one category to another, the new number is indicated in square brackets following the original number. When no publication was issued for a given year, this fact is stated.

The second part of volume 1 of the RPI Guide is a numerical list of the official distribution numbers, i.e., A (assembly), C (council), etc., arranged in a single sequence for each year without regard to the subject category. Researchers wanting to locate a particular document cited by number and date will go first to the numerical index to find the number and then turn back to the descriptive section to locate the reel number. Here also numbers that have been editorially shifted are listed under both old and new numbers with cross-references. Documents circulated to both assembly and council members, and hence assigned numbers by both groups, have been listed under both sequences, without cross-references to the alternate number.
Since volume 1 of the RPI Guide is intended to include only subject categories I-IV, there are gaps in the numerical index that will be better understood when the final volume containing the master index is published.

The introduction to the RPI Guide provides a detailed explanation of the League of Nations official numbers, early classification and sales numbers, and the organization of the RPI Guide. At the end of the introduction is a sample entry that describes each component of the format.

Volume 1 of the RPI Guide is published on quality paper in a full-sized, hard-bound volume. The print of the text is well spaced and easy to read, with a heavier typeface used for the official numbers to make them stand out from the descriptive matter.

Descriptions are arranged in a three-column format, with headings at the top of each page to show the subject category number and title and on the outer corner, the year covered. Since it is necessary to search for a league document to find the subject category and then the year, my own preference would have been to place the subject category in the more prominent position.

Some of the things the RPI Guide does not do: there is no subject or author index. It is not possible to follow the work of a committee except by establishing the beginning date and distribution number of its first report in Auffright or some other aid and then to scan every entry under the broad subject group, a time-consuming and sometimes futile search since not every report was published as a separate document. There are no cross-references from sales numbers nor from the symbols of other groups such as CH (Comite d'hygiene) which, if included in the project, are included only on the basis of their publication in the A, C, or CL series. For example, a publication of the Comite d'hygiene with the classification number C185,1926III (CH518) would be listed under C only, with no reference to the CH or sales number either in the descriptive portion or numerical list of the RPI Guide.

To find out if a commission publication is included in the microfilm collection, it is necessary to consult either the official sales catalog or the Carroll Keys to see if the publication was also assigned a number in the A, C, or CL series, which can then be located through the numerical index of the RPI Guide. When a document is not listed in either source, one can consult the numerical indexes to the Official Journal, but these did not begin publication until the mid-1920s.

The new Guide will be very helpful in using the microfilm collection, but it is clear that further bibliographical work remains to be done to provide quick and easy access to the complex mass of League of Nations publications.

A promising new aid, which will include all symbols assigned to League of Nations documents, has been announced for publication in June 1973 by Oceana Publications, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. It is A Repertoire of League of Nations Documents, prepared by Victor-Yves Ghesquière under a grant from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

The RPI project, within its announced scope covers a far more extensive group of publications than available in any nonofficial library. The collection used as the basis of the project was that of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at the United Nations, which includes the league publications transferred from the Woodrow Wilson Library in New York City. For the microfilm project, one of the library's three sets was taken apart and organized in the new way. Documents lacking in all three sets were located in the United Nations Library in Geneva.

Since many league publications consist of only one or two pages, 35mm microfilm was chosen for the project. In an archival arrangement, this would be less convenient than microfiche, but for the RPI project, in which official distribution numbers have been divided among eighteen subject categories, a continuous roll is an advantage. Reels have not been filled, and the microfilm is divided at logical breaks by date or volume numbers.

Editorial advice was provided by a group of well-qualified specialists including Harry Winton, former chief of Documents Reference at the United Nations Library in New York, the
initial editor of the project who was responsible for the basic concept of the project and the sorting of documents according to subject category.

Microfilming was done with the permission and assistance of Joseph Groesbeck, former deputy director of the United Nations Library at New York and his successor, Marie Touren, with the cooperation of Norman Field, associate chief librarian at the Geneva Library. Paul Fenster served as executive editor and Edward A. Reno as the RPI Guide editor with the assistance of other staff members of Research Publications.

Research Publications is to be commended for providing the staff and financial assistance necessary for making the project possible. In addition to the major task of calendaring the documents, much editorial work had to be done: the provision of descriptive abstracts, assignment of titles where existing titles were misleading or nonexistent, verification of dates and place of publication, changing categories of documents obviously wrong, assignment of numbers where omitted, and assignment of subdivisions in categories later divided into sections A and B.

Although not all league publications have been included in the project, a glance at the League of Nations sales catalog will reveal that a large number of commission reports have been assigned official numbers and are thus included in the present project. Research Publications has indicated a willingness to publish additional groups of documents or serials if there is sufficient demand.

It is possible to purchase an individual serial or subject category of the documents, for example, the Treaty Series, which is priced at $880, considerably less than the Dumaties Inc. microfilm of the same title (reviewed in MR, January 1973).

The RPI Guide may also be purchased separately. Although designed to be used with the microfilm collection, it could be used by a scholar without the film to identify the subject content of a document cited in another work or to scan publications of the league in a particular field of interest during a given time period.

The project is recommended for all libraries with research needs in political science, economics, and other areas of interest in the league period because it includes a large amount of material that cannot be found except by travel to the United Nations libraries in both New York and in Geneva and because the project is organized in a logical way, which makes individual groups of publications easier to use. It is strongly recommended for research libraries which do not already have league collections, libraries with incomplete collections, and as a backup copy for a collection in poor physical condition.

(The microform evaluation for this publication appears on page 289.)