

CHAPTER ONE

WHO ORGANISES?

The Individual as Organiser

A book exhibition may be organised by anyone. Often the leading spirit is a librarian or a teacher. Not only do these two sorts of people in particular realise the value of books and the huge range of them that exists, but they also often have the knowledge of how to categorise them.

The Committee

Even if it is an individual who starts the ball rolling, a committee is usually needed to plan and carry out the idea. Book exhibitions entail a great deal of detailed work, as we shall see as we read on. It's very unlikely that one person can find the time to carry out all the necessary jobs. A small band of helpers is the answer.

But our committee has a further important function. If co-operation is to be secured from an organisation with the ideal site; from all the many people who have to be contacted to get the exhibition known and talked about; from (sometimes) bank managers and solicitors and accountants; from caretakers and decorators and printers; then the chances are that six or eight people across a range of interests will be able to do this more easily than one person working alone.

Who's on the Committee?

The first rule is as few as possible. The larger the committee, the longer the meetings; the longer the

meetings, the lower the enthusiasm. The committee needs neither speechmakers nor passengers. Each person on it should serve a definite purpose. First comes the person who inspired the whole idea. Whatever his or her other abilities, it's that person's continuing enthusiasm, despite all difficulties and setbacks, that the committee will value. Then if there are likely to be financial problems (see Chapter 2) it's good to have someone really numerate, someone whose daily job, preferably, is dealing with figures: bank manager or clerk; chief cashier; accountant or auditor. That way money won't be wasted.

Next you need a librarian or someone closely connected with whatever local libraries exist. Such persons understand the problems of obtaining books, cataloguing them, sorting them and so on. They also probably know other book people, from local author to local bookseller, or at least how to get in touch with them.

You need a couple of people who are just doers, people who will lend themselves to shifting - or arranging to be shifted - bookcases, trestle tables, shelves and boxes of books. Of course if such people know the editors of local papers or the controllers of local radio stations, so much the better. If they can actually persuade a Minister or an Ambassador or other high dignitary to open or visit the exhibition, then that alone will have earned them a place.

Finally, you need a chairman. Such a person must remain cool, must be willing to shut up talkative people and encourage silent ones to speak, be used to taking overall views, be willing to delegate (but keep an eye on detail). Naturally there aren't many such people around, but a person with these virtues in lesser or greater degree will make the chairman you need.