

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF EDUCATION

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A GRAPHIC SURVEY OF BOOK
PUBLICATION, 1890-1916

BY

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
Washington, March 10, 1917.

SIR: Any comprehensive understanding of the educational life and intellectual and cultural tendencies of a country must include some knowledge of the number and kinds of books produced and the relative demands for books of the several classes. I therefore recommend that the graphic survey of book publications in the United States from 1890 to 1916, prepared by Fred E. Woodward, be published as a bulletin of the Bureau of Education.

Respectfully submitted.

P. P. CLAXTON,
Commissioner.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

A SURVEY OF BOOK PUBLICATION.

The rapid increase in the number of books published in the United States, especially during the past decade, has been the subject of much comment. Statistics are collected regularly by the trade papers, and these figures give the number of books for each year in each of several well-defined classes. Prior to the year 1900 this classification embraced 19 divisions, but in 1901 a new class, that of "reference books," was added. In 1911, by the adoption of the international system of classification, three entirely new classes were added, viz, philology, agriculture, and business. There are at the present time 24 classes, as follows:¹

1. Philosophy.
2. Religion and theology.
3. Sociology and economics.
4. Military and naval science.
5. Law.
6. Education.
7. Philology.
8. Science.
9. Applied science, engineering.
10. Medicine, hygiene.
11. Agriculture.
12. Domestic economy.
13. Business.
14. Fine arts.
15. Music.
16. Games, amusements.
17. General literature, essays.
18. Poetry and drama.
19. Fiction.
20. Juvenile books.
21. History.
22. Geography and travel.
23. Biography, genealogy.
24. General works, miscellaneous.

> Reference to the general chart, which shows the total number of books published in the United States for each year, reveals that since 1898 the number of books has been rapidly increasing, the figures for 1903 exhibiting an increase of 50 per cent over 1899, those of 1907 an increase of 25 per cent over 1903, and those of 1910 more than 40 per cent over 1907. The year 1910 was the most prolific ever known in the book trade, no less than 13,470 titles being recorded.

The chart shows some fluctuations—a loss in 1906, 1911, and 1912, and a decrease of 2,276 titles due to the European war in 1915. The panic of 1893 was followed by a decrease of books in 1894. The Wall Street panic of 1907 has been assigned as the cause of the decrease in 1908.

The chart exhibits a block for each year from 1890 to 1916, both inclusive, and the figures in the middle of each block indicate the actual number of books published during the year. The figures in the upper part of each block give the number of reprints or new editions

¹ In 1918 a new class, known as Military and Naval Science, was established and 94 books were recorded from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31 of that year.

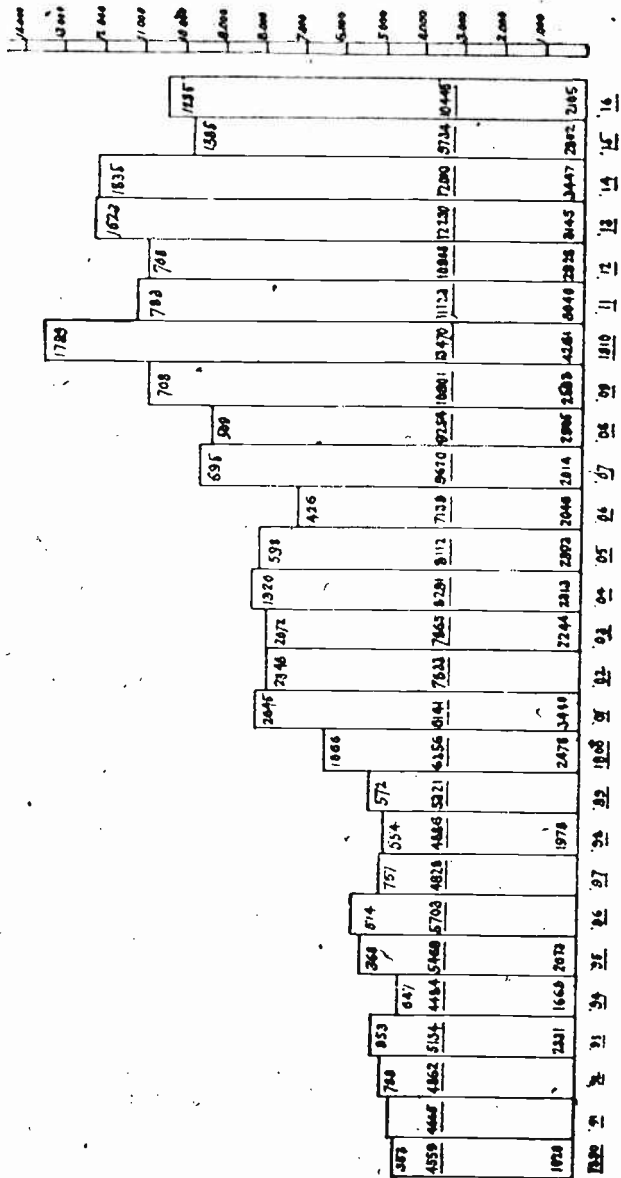
and those in the lower part of the block the number of books by foreign authors.

The number of reprints or new editions varies considerably, but the proportion seems to be growing smaller as the number of native writers increases. Fewer than one-third of the books issued in this country are by foreign authors.

Of special interest is the fiction chart. (Fig. 19.) Fiction has always been an important factor in the total number of books issued in the United States, the exact proportion varying from 27.4 per cent in 1901 (which gave the largest percentage as well as the largest recorded number of fiction) to 8.77 per cent in 1914.

It is the generally accepted belief that a large part of publications are works of fiction, and that this proportion is increasing as the years go by. But the fact is that the proportion of fiction to the whole, as well as the actual number of works of fiction, is constantly decreasing. The number recorded in 1916 was 932, with one exception (919 in 1915) the smallest number since 1898; in fact, a smaller number than in 1886, twenty-seven years before, when 1,080 were issued. The records show that in 1890 fiction was 24 per cent of the whole number; 1893, 22 per cent; 1899, 17.5 per cent; 1903, 18.6 per cent. Since 1918 the percentage of fiction has decreased. In 1906 fiction was 16.4 per cent; 1907, 12.2 per cent; 1911, 9.1 per cent; 1913, 9.45 per cent; 1914, 8.77 per cent; 1915, 9.44 per cent; 1916, 8.91 per cent.

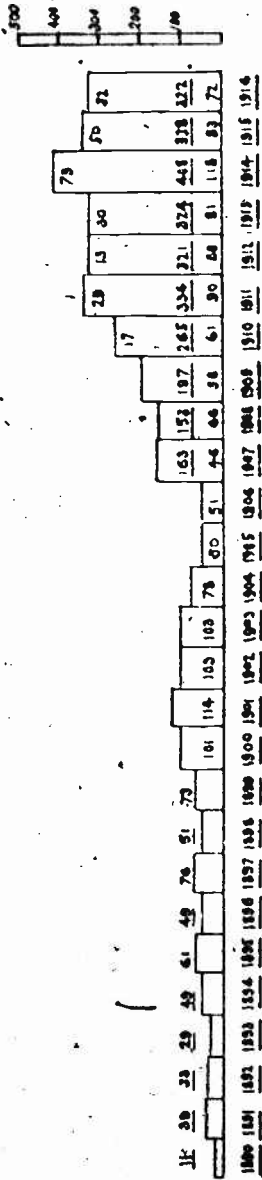
GRAPHIC SURVEY OF BOOK PUBLICATION.



General chart, showing the total of all classes combined for each year from 1880 to and including 1916. The figures in the central portion of the block are the totals, while the figures in the upper part are reissues, and the figures in the lower part represent the number of books by other than American authors.

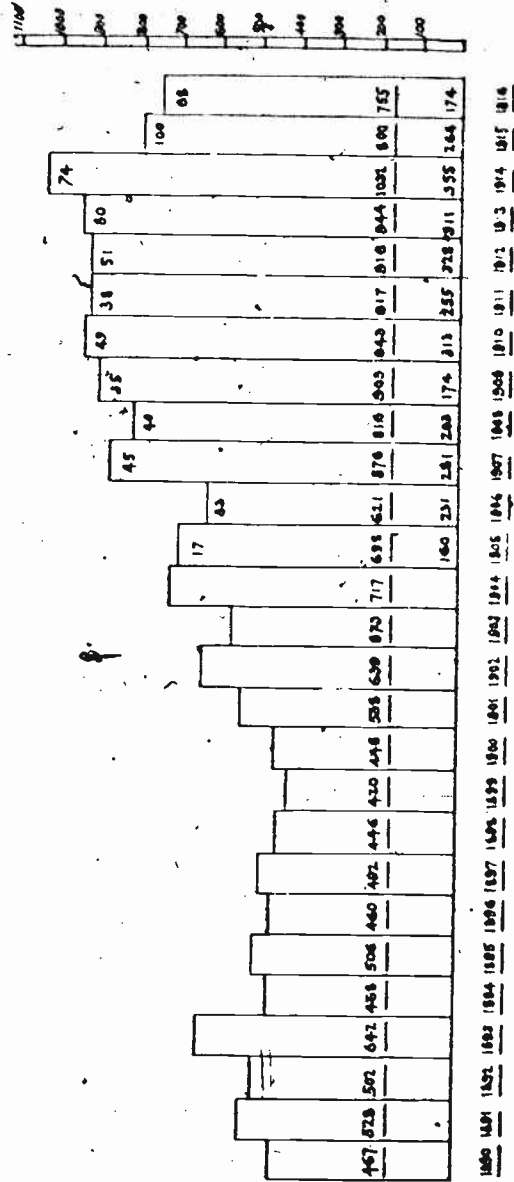


GRAPHIC SURVEY OF BOOK PUBLICATION.



1. PHILOSOPHY.

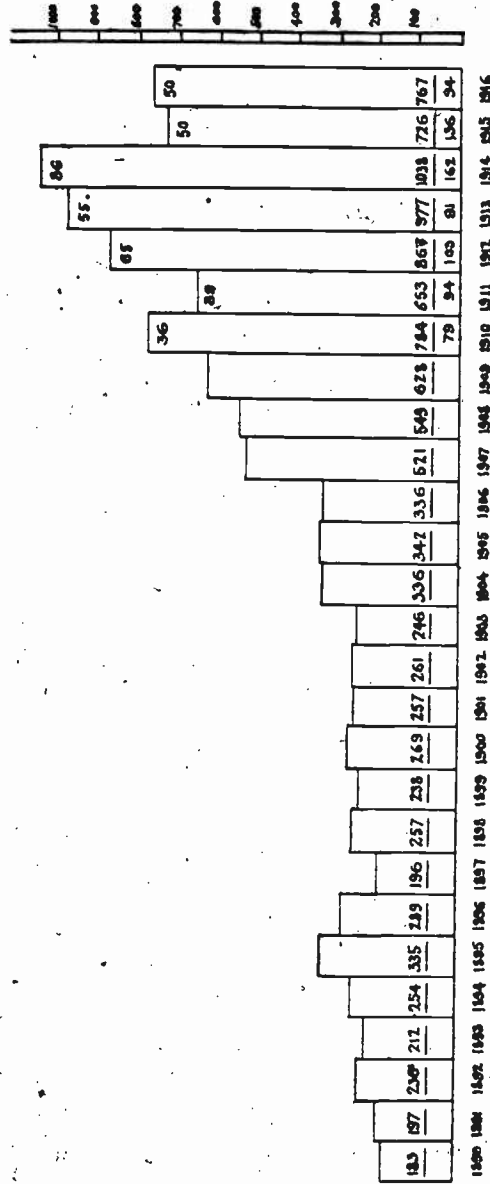
The chart for Philosophy presents an uneventful line from 1890 to 1906. Beginning in 1907 with 123, the number increased steadily to 1914, with 408. There was a slight falling off in 1915 and 1916. The increase in this class were 7 per cent to 19 per cent during the early part of the last decade, but reached 20 per cent in 1914. Books by American authors average about 75 per cent of the total.



2 RELIGION AND THEOLOGY.

This class shows a strong and sturdy outline, excelled in this respect only by History. Even in 1900 the number was 467. In 1900 it was 448, but the next year an increase of 90 was followed by still greater annual increase, culminating in 1914 with 1,032, the largest number ever recorded. The whole number in 1916 was 755. The percentage of religious ranges from 2 per cent to 8 per cent.

GRAPHIC SURVEY OF BOOK PUBLICATION.



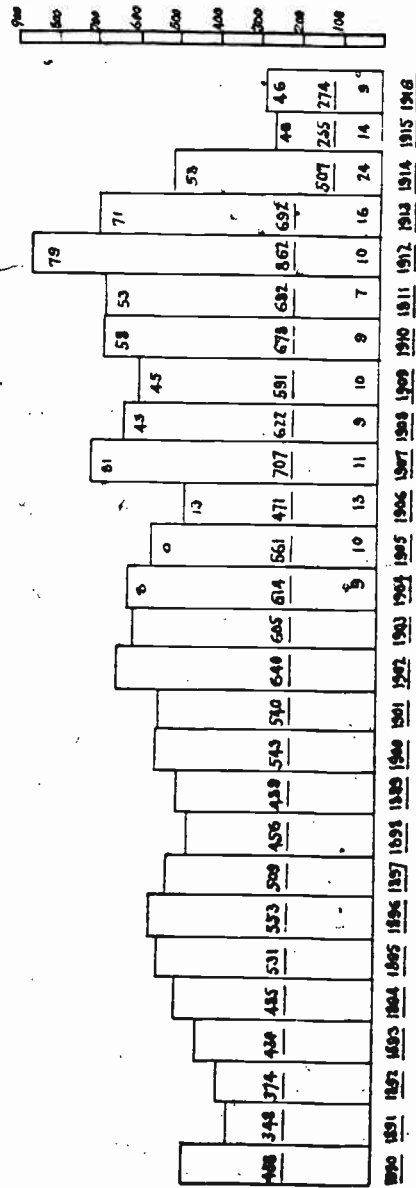
3. SOCIOLOGY AND ECONOMICS.

The group "Sociology and Economics" has had a phenomenal growth during the past nine years. During that time the total number of books in this group has reached 6,700, very few of which are reissues. The number of books in this class from abroad is very small and would not exceed 100 per year for the past 15 years, the largest number in any year being 162 in 1914. The record for the year 1916 is 767 titles.

94
1916

4. MILITARY AND NAVAL SCIENCE.

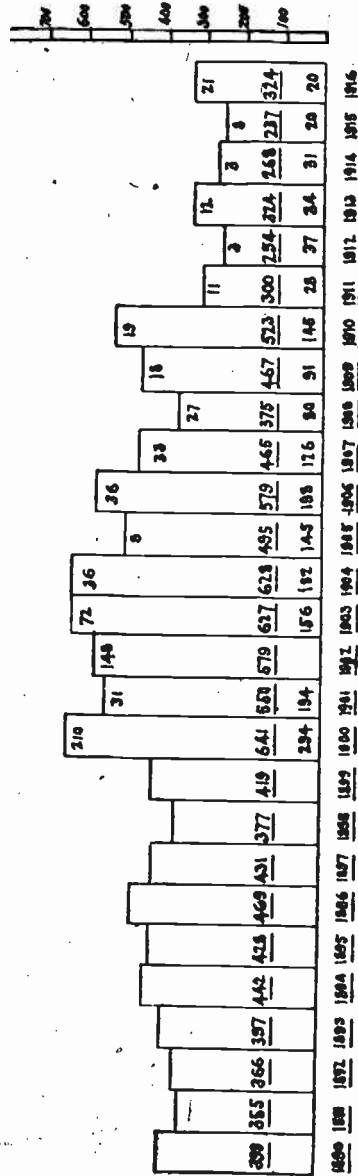
A new class, established in the latter part of 1916; 94 titles were recorded from September 1 to December 31, 1916.



5. LAW.

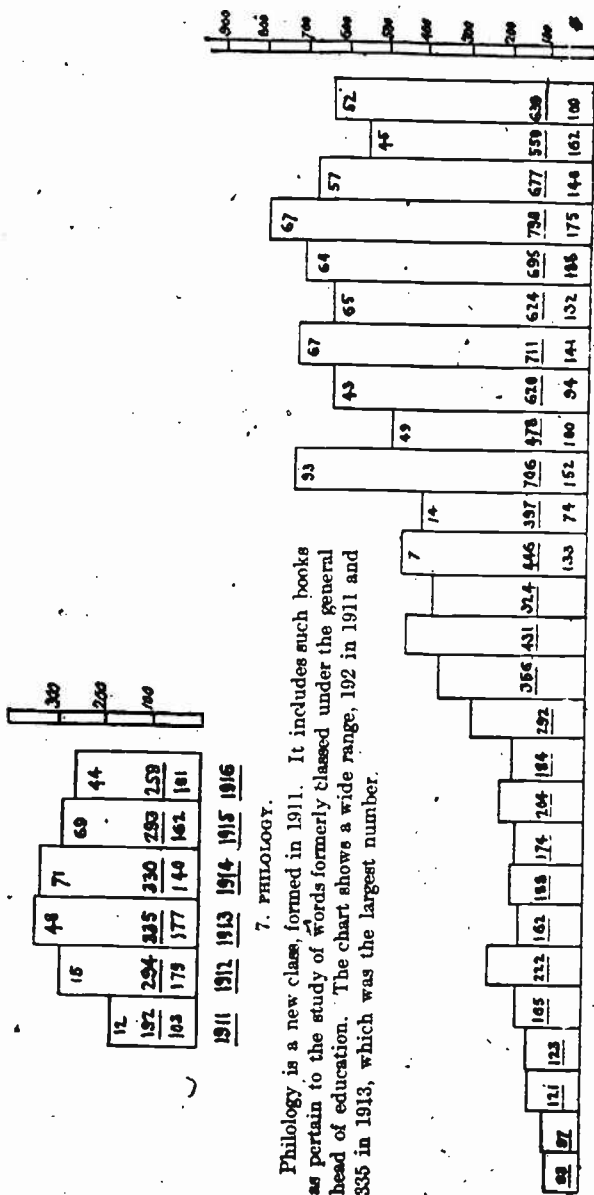
There has been a remarkable decrease in books of the law group. The number dropped from 862 in 1912 (the highest number) to 255 in 1915, the lowest recorded since 1890. The number recorded in 1916 was 289. Nearly all the law books are the product of American authors, only a very small percentage (in some years less than 1 per cent) coming from England.

GRAPHIC SURVEY OF BOOK PUBLICATION.



6. EDUCATION.

The diagram marked "Education" is an unusual one. Instead of exhibiting books on educational topics, swelling the great gain of the last nine or more years, it shows that the period embraced between the years 1900 and 1904 was high tide in this class and that since that time a decided decline has set in. The apparently rapid decline is due, however, to a revised and more careful classification; books on certain topics, originally included under Education, are now classed under separate headings—Business and Philology. The year 1898 recorded 377 books in this class, rising to 641 in 1900 and dropping to 375 in 1908, 10 years later. A slight decrease was seen in 1901 and a steady decline from 1904 (628) to 1908 (375). The decrease in 1908 was reflected in the entire book trade.



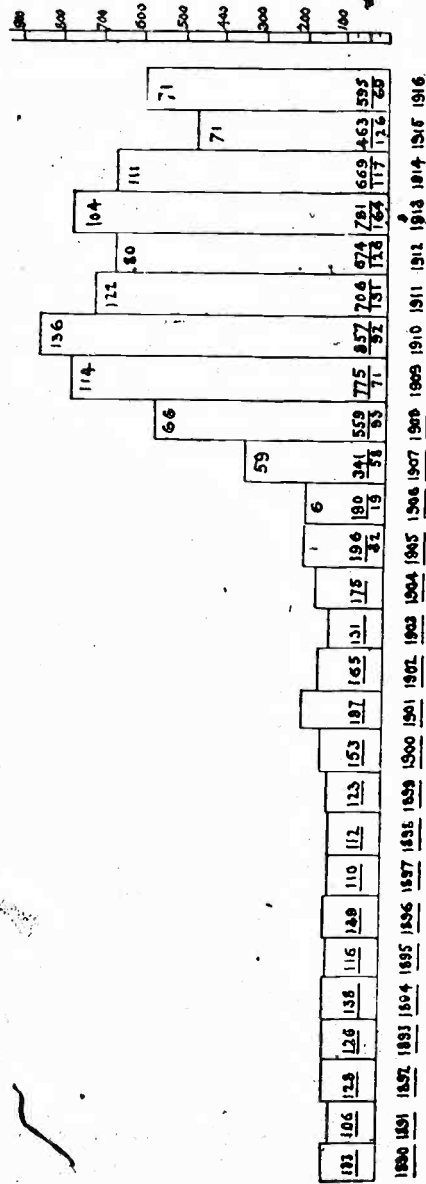
7. PHILOLOGY.

Philology is a new class formed in 1911. It includes such books as pertain to the study of words formerly classed under the general head of education. The chart shows a wide range, 192 in 1911 and 335 in 1913, which was the largest number.

8. SCIENCE.

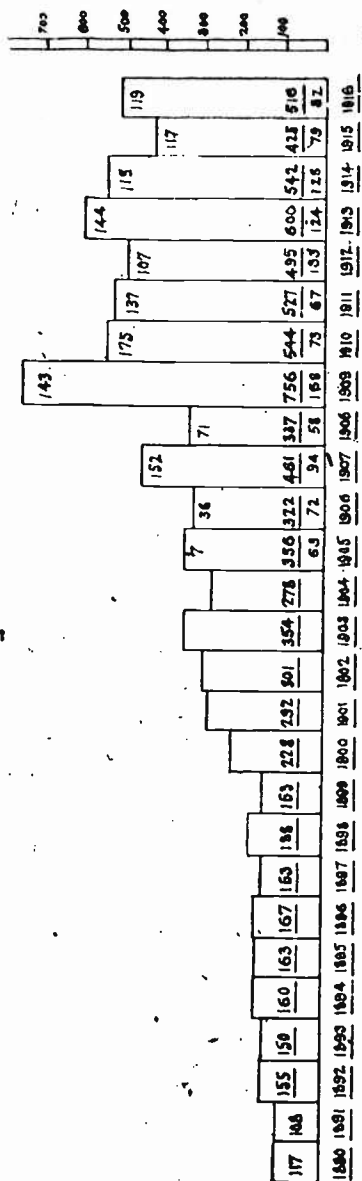
Physical and Mathematical Science presents a normal outline of growth from a very small beginning in 1890 of 83 books to 790 in 1913, which was its high-water mark. The decline of 1906 was in a measure due to the printers' strike in New York City. The loss in 1916 is attributable to the war, although 1916 registered 639, an increase of 91 over the previous year. It is interesting to note that no less than 15 classes declined in 1906 and that nearly all of them apparently made it up the next year. There are but few releases in this class, the past 10 years showing from 7 to 93 titles. The number of books by foreign authors is very small, averaging about 150 annually.

GRAPHIC SURVEY OF BOOK PUBLICATION.



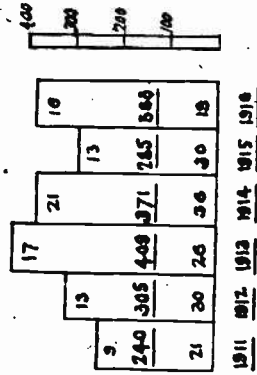
9. APPLIED SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING.

Applied Science, termed "Useful Arts" in the earlier classification, presents some interesting features. After remaining for 16 years on practically a dead level, it suddenly expanded from a maximum of 197 annually to 857 in the year 1910, followed by 706 in 1911, 674 in 1912, and 781 in 1913. The past four years show a decline, the number for 1916 being 595. Reprints in this class during the past 10 years vary from 1 to 136. In 1916 there were 71 reprints. Books by foreign authors in this class have varied from 19 to 164; in 1916 the number was 126, and in 1916 but 69.



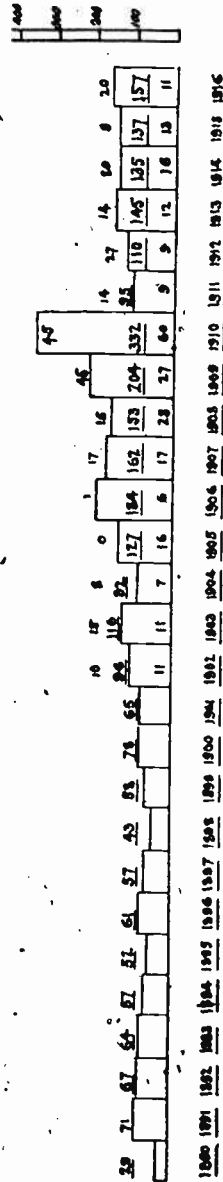
10. MEDICINE AND HYGIENE.

The Medicine and Hygiene group shows about the same outline as does Science, except that the biggest year was 1909, with 756 books. A slight decline appears since that time; in 1915 the total was 463. There are numerous reprints in this class, averaging more than 100 annually, the largest number being 175 in 1910. Foreign books have a notable place; the average number is 60 and the largest number 168 (in 1910). In 1916 the record was 516, with 119 reprints and 82 from abroad.



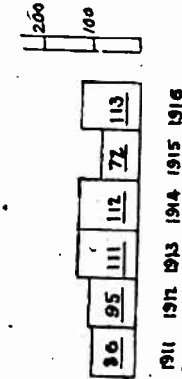
11. AGRICULTURE.

Agriculture is a new class, formed in 1911, when the International Classification was adopted. The year 1913 shows the largest number, with 409, and 1911 the smallest, with 249. The issues are from 9 to 21, and books by foreign authors average about 35 per annum. The year 1916 (383) exhibits a slight decline in number of books from abroad, but an increase of 98 in the total number.



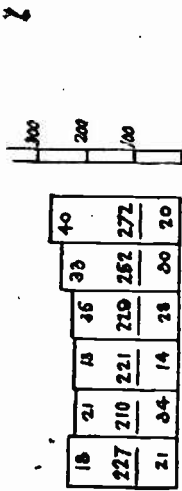
12. DOMESTIC ECONOMY.

This class shows a rapid increase, beginning about 1904. The highest number recorded was 332 in 1930. The subsequent decline is probably due to a new and more discriminating classification. Agriculture, a separate class since 1911, was formerly a part of this class.



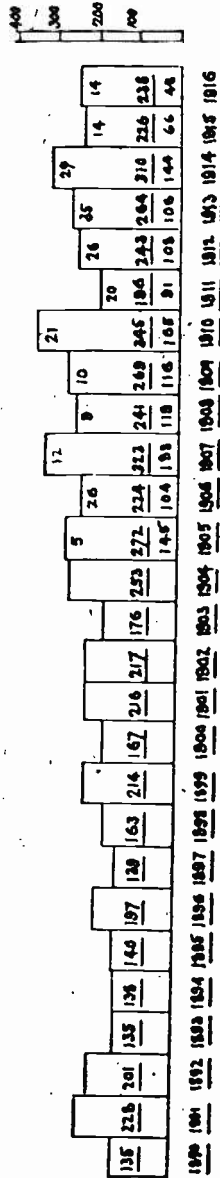
15. MUSIC.

Until 1911 books pertaining to the science and study of music were classed under the heading Fine Arts. Music has generally occupied the apex of the pyramid, with the smallest number of books. The number has varied from 112 to 72 per year, the latter number being recorded in 1915, while the record for 1916 showed 113 entries and a gain of more than 50 per cent over the previous year.



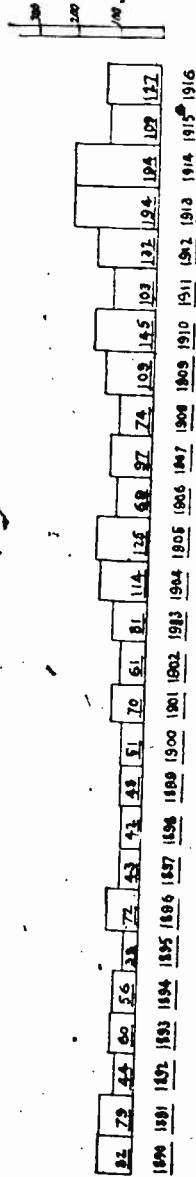
13. BUSINESS.

Business is a new class, formed in 1911, and comprises books on business management and efficiency, formerly placed in different groups. The average for this class has been about 200. The largest number (272) was recorded in 1916.



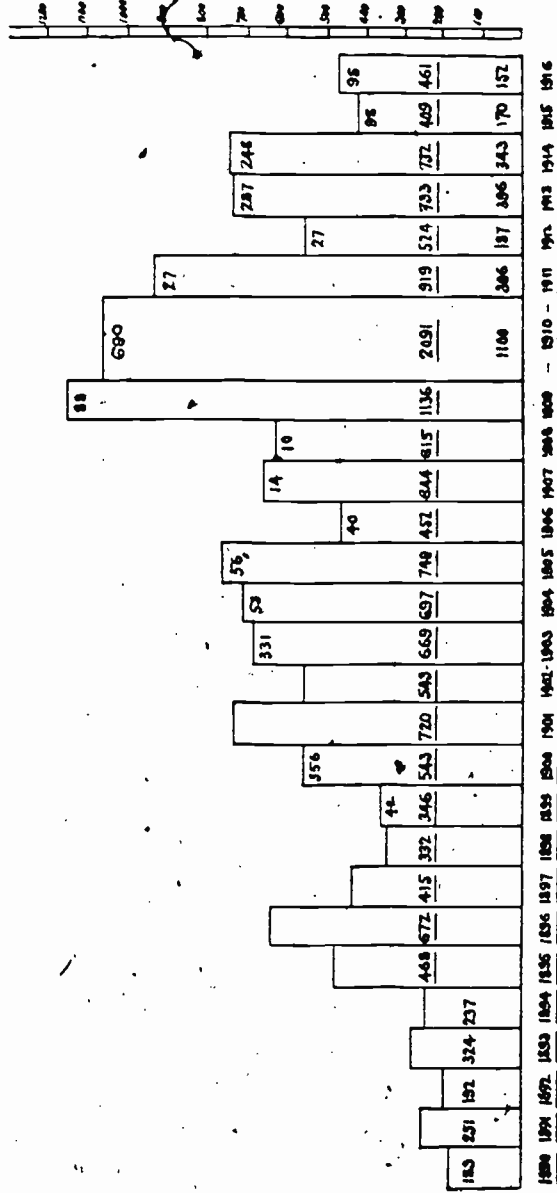
14. FINE ARTS.

Fine Arts has been a fluctuating class. Its growth has been fairly consistent with the increase of population, the largest number appearing in 1910, when the record was 345. This class draws largely from foreign countries; in 1905 and 1907 more than 50 per cent of the books in this class were either imported or written by foreign authors. Reissues are infrequent, averaging only 20 per year. The whole number recorded in 1916 was 238.



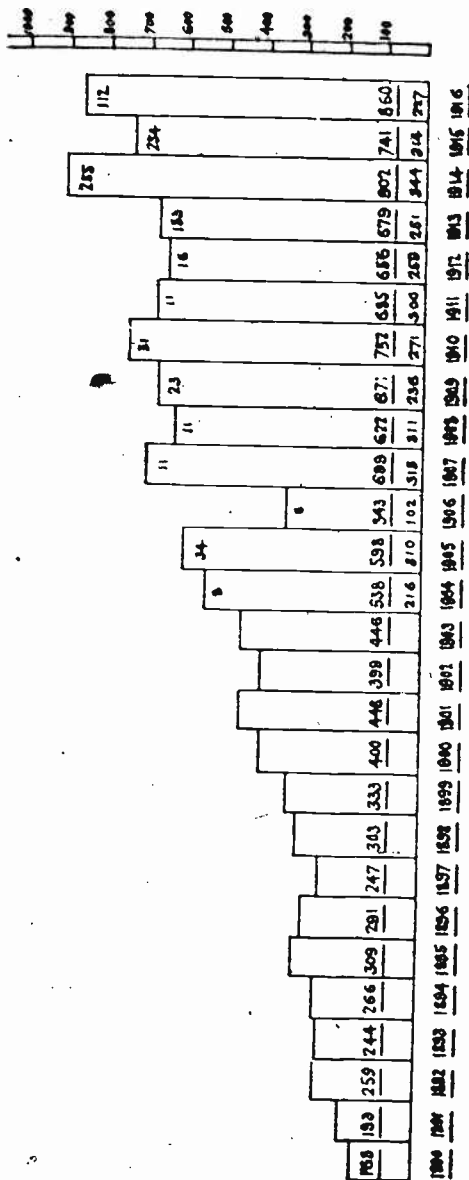
16. GAMES, SPORTS, AND AMUSEMENTS.

This class presents no special features of interest. There has been a slight but steady growth, about in keeping with the increase of population in the United States during the same years. The number in 1908 was 74; this was slightly less than in 1850, when 82 were registered. The largest number was in 1913 and 1914, when 124 were registered in each year.



17. GENERAL LITERATURE, ESSAYS.

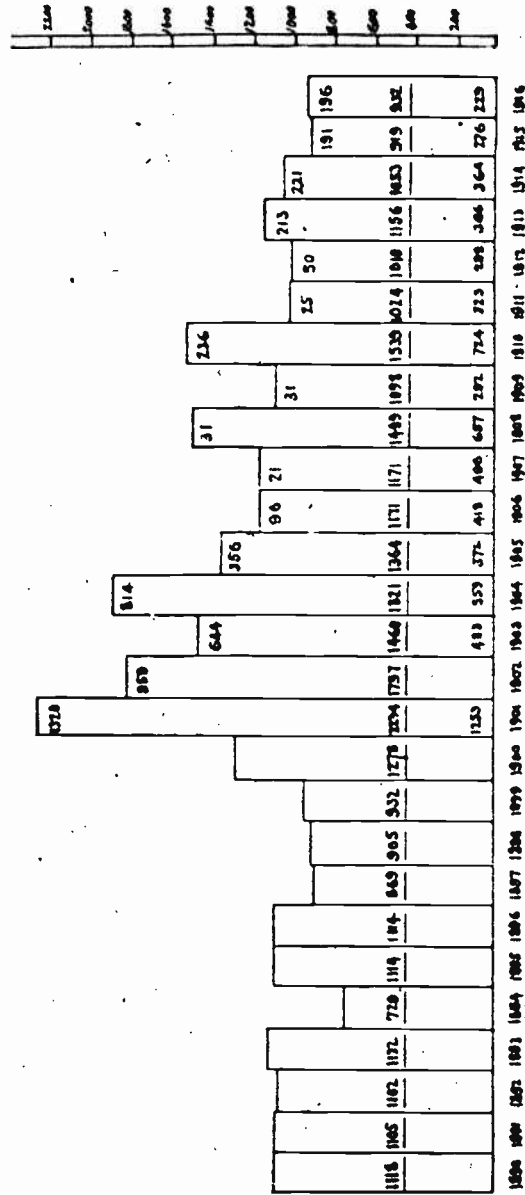
This class naturally presents a very uneven record. Its banner year was 1910, the most notable year which the book trade has ever known in America. The total of 2,091 was made up of a large number of reprints of old books (690); it also included 1,100 books by authors other than Americans. These were in some sense the aftermath of 1900, and included reissues of many of the works of the remarkable list of men and women whose centenary, bicentenary, or tercentenary took place in 1900—Lincoln, Poe, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Calvin, Samuel Johnson, Gogol, Mendelssohn, Haydn, Mrs. Kemble, Edward Fitzgerald, Tennyson, Darwin, Gladstone, Mrs. Browning, and Charles Lever. Reprints in this class fell as low as 10 in 1908 and rose to 356 in 1900 and to 690 in 1910. The number of importations was 306 in 1911 and only 152 in 1916.



18. POETRY AND DRAMA.

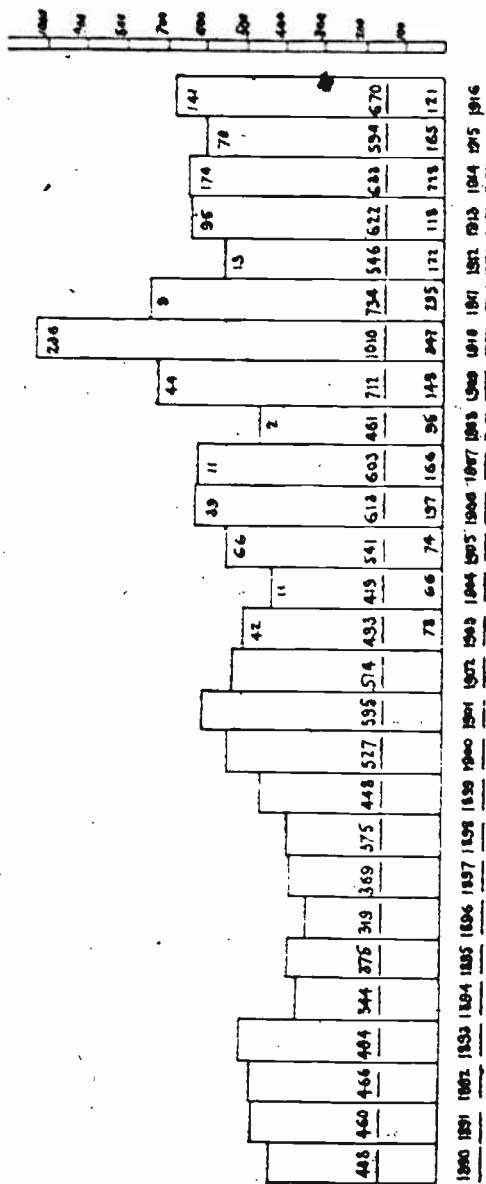
The diagram for Poetry and Drama shows a steady increase, beginning in 1897, when 247 titles were issued, and culminating in 1910 with 752 titles, a record which was almost equaled in the two following years, and exceeded in 1914 with a record of 902 titles.

Although the chart fails to indicate the fact, inasmuch as Poetry and Drama are counted together, the past seven years have been very rich in the production of works of a dramatic character, not only of famous authors of foreign countries, but of native producers as well.



10. FICTION.

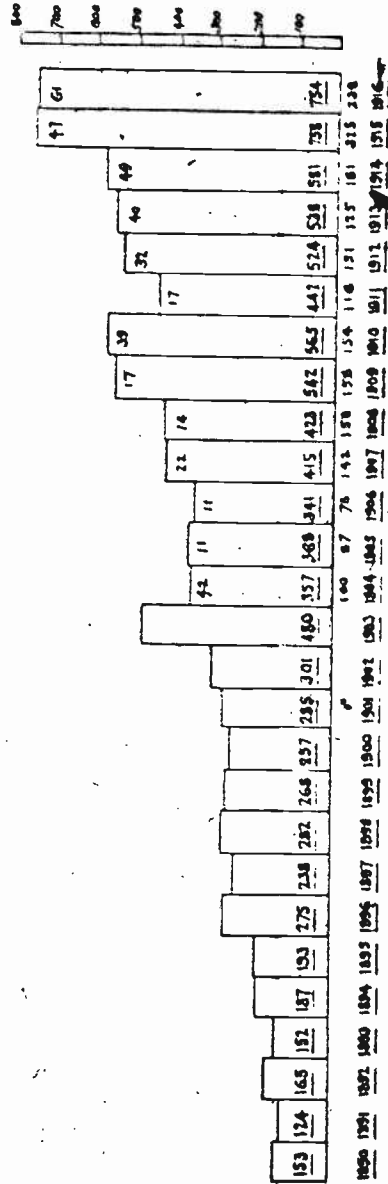
Fiction has always been an interesting factor in the number of books issued. The proportionate number of works of fiction is decreasing, however. (See p. 6.)



20. JUVENILE BOOKS.

Juvenile books reached their highest point in 1910 with 1,016 books. The number in this class fluctuates without regard to years and times, probably depending more upon the whim or fancy of individual publishers than any other class. Comparatively few books are reprinted, the largest number in the past 15 years being 236 out of 1,010 in 1910. In 1911 only 9 were reprinted, and in 1915 the number was 70 out of 694. The very large number of juvenile books from across the water is noteworthy; there were 347 in 1910 and 255 in 1911.

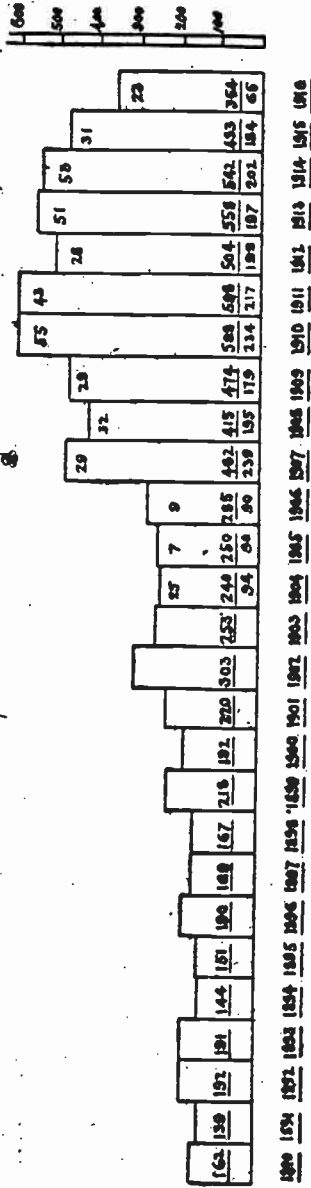
Two singular facts are noted in the diagram: First, that the number of books in this section was greater in 1890, 1891, 1902, and 1893 than for the five succeeding years; second, that the number in 1904 (419) was actually smaller than the number in 1891, 1892, and 1893.



21. HISTORY.

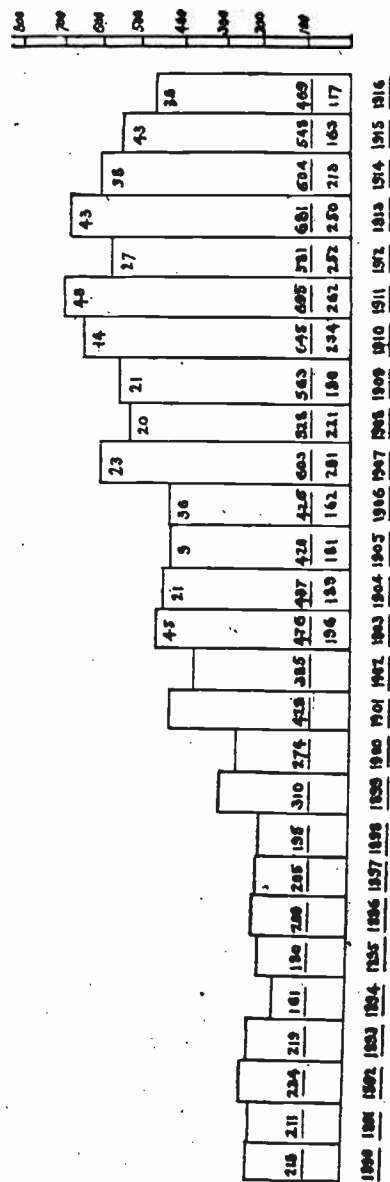
The diagram for history shows a steady increase since 1860, when 257 were recorded. The highest point was reached in 1915, with 734 titles. The year 1903, following two years of almost world-wide peace, was unusually rich in history books. Comparison will show that Education, Poetry, Literature, Science, Medicine, and Biography also increased in 1915, while a decrease was noted in Fiction, Juvenile books, Fine Arts, and Religion. The number of reprints was small. Books by foreign authors numbered 325 in 1915 and 238 in 1916, when the whole number was 734.

GRAPHIC SURVEY OF BOOK PUBLICATION.



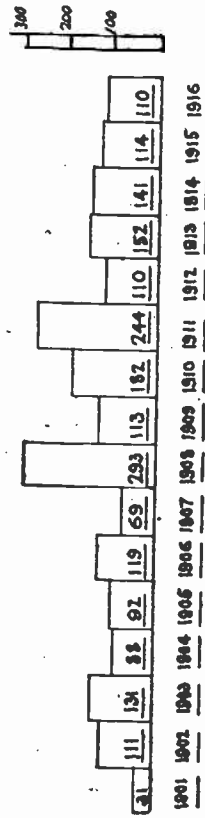
22. GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVEL.

The Geography and Travel group offers a counterpart to the History group in that the growth begun 15 years ago and has continued almost without interruption to the present time, the last nine years being especially noteworthy. In 1910, 599 titles were recorded in this section, and in 1911, 588 titles, with a slight decline since that time. As in the case of Biography and Fine Arts, many of the most important books in Geography and Travel are from foreign countries, averaging from 30 to 40 per cent of the total output. In 1916, however, only 65 out of the total of 354 were foreign. The number of reprints is small, ranging from 7 to 55 per annum.



23. BIOGRAPHY, GENEALOGY, AND MEMOIRS.

This class was small and declining from 1890 to 1900. A substantial increase was maintained until 1913 (681), since which time the number has declined, there being 469 in 1916. Prior to 1900 the number varied from 161 in 1890 to 310 in 1899. This was the year following the Spanish War, and many memoirs and books of travel were published, especially on Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines, but in 1901 the number increased to 423, as compared with 274 the previous year. There are very few reprints in this class, the average for the past 15 years being only 30. In 1916 the number was 43 out of a total of 548. The proportion from abroad is and has been large, as many as 281 in 1907. In the nine years since and including 1907, out of a total of 5,448, books by foreign authors numbered 2,066, or nearly 40 per cent.



24. GENERAL WORKS, CYCLOPEDIAS, BIBLIOGRAPHIES, MISCELLANEOUS.

This class really began its existence in 1901, when 31 books were registered. The diagram shows that this class reached its highest mark in 1908 with 293 entries, but decreased in 1911 to 110 and in 1912 to 110. The number in 1915 was 114, and 4 less (110) in 1916.

