

POSSIBLE FUTURE ROLES OF THE UTAH ACADEMY

H. Tracy Hall
Brigham Young University
Presidential Address

Reprinted from
Proceedings, Utah Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters
Volume 38, 1961

POSSIBLE FUTURE ROLES OF THE UTAH ACADEMY

H. Tracy Hall
Brigham Young University
Presidential Address

The Academies of most states have, for several years, been on the decline in membership, activity, and interest. Some of the possible reasons for this are: (1) ease of transportation to national society meetings and availability of funds for the same; (2) larger audiences at national meetings and more diverse interests; (3) the general trend toward centralism in government as well as other organizations; (4) the seeming preference of people (including "scholars") for entertainment nowadays rather than something that requires mental effort; (5) competition with many other organizations that provide the same or similar functions; (6) the administration of Academies generally by part-time, unpaid help, by persons who have other responsibilities of a heavy nature, while some organizations have obtained a sound financial footing and consequently have top officers who spend full time in their jobs.

With regard to the Utah Academy, it has been particularly noted that for several years the physical sciences (mathematics, chemistry, physics), and to some extent the earth sciences, have been giving very little support to the Academy compared to that given by the humanities, fine arts, and biological science sections.

In the light of these developments, it seems pertinent that several questions should be asked. Should the Academy be divided into separate Academies: an Academy of Sciences and an Academy of Arts and Letters? Would such a division be advantageous to each group? Should the Academy be abandoned in favor of other competing organizations? Should an attempt be made to incorporate competing groups into the Academy structure? Are there new roles that the Academy could assume to more satisfactorily serve its members? Should the Academy attempt to out-perform its competition and attempt to attract membership away from competing organizations? In view of the trend towards large central organizations, would a Rocky Mountain Academy tend to be more effective than individual state academies? (Note that Colorado and Wyoming already have a joint Academy.)

Would an official charter from the State of Utah for the Academy (similar to the Federal charter granted the National Academy of Science) help the Academy to perform its functions? Under such a charter the Academy might form panels of experts to advise the state and might foster Sciences, Arts, and Letters within the state from a more official position. Such a charter might open the way towards obtaining state funds for Academy purposes and also might open the door for additional Federal and private funds for both local and national purposes. An additional advantage of official state sanction might be that a state building could be obtained for the permanent official headquarters of the Academy and increased financial revenue could make it possible to have some full-time Academy officers to run its affairs. Disadvantages of such a charter could arise from the fact that state organizations might tend to overlook the broad objectives of Sciences, Arts, and Letters and might cause the Academy to spend its efforts on problems of immediate expediency to the state.

The official publication of most state academies is its *Proceedings*, and in some fields, the *Proceedings* have become an unacceptable medium for the publication of a scholar's works. Attempts to make the *Proceedings* more attractive have not been very successful. The problem of Academy publications in general needs looking into in a most thorough manner if they are to be of value to all members of the Academy. In the areas of publications, patents and copyrights, the state's universities are providing some services at the present time. I think it is possible that the Academy might offer services in these areas that would be more acceptable to Academy members than those offered by the universities and in addition might provide financial benefits to the Academy in the form of royalties.

In the area of finances, Utah Academy dues are very small compared to the dues paid by members of most professional organizations. If the Academy could achieve the same eminence in the eyes of its members that is enjoyed by other organizations to which Academy members belong, I am certain that dues could be increased considerably. The increased revenue would be a great asset to the Academy.

If the Academy could, through the years, obtain sufficient funds of its own, it might sponsor grants to local scholars for research and creative effort or, alternatively, it might serve as the screening body for the administration of private, state and federal grants.

I am certain that there are many more facets of the Academy's operation what would be worth exploring. But my objective at this time is not to do this nor to make specific recommendations. Rather it

is to excite a re-examination of the Academy's functions and possibilities with the hope that its future course might be directed so as to best serve Academy membership and society in general.

At the conclusion of my term of office as President of the Academy, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to those who have served with me. I also wish to thank the members of the committees who have performed specific duties requested of them during the year; and, finally, I wish those who succeed to the various Academy positions at the close of this meeting success in their endeavors during the coming year.