

STARTING AN ADULT NEW READER COLLECTION FOR \$200?

Editor's Note:

Following information excerpted from a paper by Jean A. Whitman, Extension Services Librarian, Robeson County Public Library. To obtain full text ask for "Loose Paper No. 5" and write Jean at Post Office Box 1346, Lumberton, NC 28358.

Depending upon the county in which you live, anywhere from 16 percent to 46 percent of your adult population have less than eight years of formal education (see Appendix). For many individuals, so little formal education means illiteracy or functional illiteracy. Yet these people are citizens, who pay taxes to support the public library.

Many adult non-readers do not have the energy and motivation to begin to learn to read now. There are those, however, who do. They are taking a brave step when they tackle their illiteracy, most of us would agree. There ought to be a way to provide concrete support for their efforts. In addition, depending upon your county, there are some number of foreign-language speaking adults, most of whom are trying in one way or another to learn English. They too need the help of the public library.

Supposing, then, that some effort is afoot in your county to teach adults to read, how can the library help? Here is one way. Adult beginning readers and English-as-a-second-language students and their tutors have a special problem finding reading materials which are easy and have adult content. Most adults do not like to read children's books. While some children's literature is excellent, the content is generally not suited to the needs of persons with years of experience of living. At the same time, the regular library collection is far beyond the reach of the new reader. The library can respond to this need. You can begin with \$200.

Incidentally, there are, as you know, many teenagers in school and out of school who do not read well. Some are involved in remedial reading programs. They too have a need for simple language materials. To a large extent the interests of teenagers and adults overlap. You will probably find, as we have, that your YA's will use your Adult New Reader (ANR) materials as much as the adults.

Before spending money, you will want to think about what to do with the materials when you get them. I would suggest the following:

- 1) Provide a separate collection for ANR materials, located in a place that is visible, but out of the mainstream of traffic. It should be designated in a neutral way; i.e., do not call it "Easy Reads for Adults" or anything which labels the user as a poor reader.
- 2) Use face-out shelving and paperback racks. ANR materials tend to be skinny paperbacks. They look like nothing shelved in the regular way. They are attractive and inviting with the covers in full view. Cataloging may be an unnecessary expense.
- 3) Color-code with pieces of tape at the base of the spine to indicate the grade level of the reading material. The New Readers Press catalog provides the Gunning Fog Index (a simple readability test) for most items. A chart posted next to the ANR collection in our library reads:

Color Code**Reading Level**

Yellow

1 - 2

Orange

3 - 5

Green

6 - 8

- 4) You might want to consider a special circulation policy for adult beginning readers. Six weeks may not be enough time for a new reader to finish a book. At first, he may only read with his tutor.

There are two publishers which are good sources of simple language materials for adults. You can buy enough from these publishers to get your ANR collection off the ground. Begin by sending for their catalogs:

Fearon Pitman Publishers

6 Davis Drive

Belmont, CA 94002

New Readers Press

Box 131

Syracuse, NY 13210

Should you wish to expand the collection, the following bibliographies will be helpful.

Forinash, Melissa R. *Reader Development Bibliography*. New Readers Press, 1977.

_____. Supplement 1978.

_____. Supplement 1979.

Available from New Readers Press for \$5.00; annotated; prices, reading levels, and addresses of publishers given.

MacDonald, Barbara. *Bibliography of Reading Materials for Basic Reading and English as a Second Language*. Literacy Volunteers of America, 1977.

Available for \$3.75 from Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc., Sixth Floor Midtown Plaza, 700 East Water St., Syracuse, N.Y., 13210. Annotated; arranged by reading level; prices and publishers' addresses provided.

_____. *National Endowment for the Humanities Bibliography of Humanistic Reading for Grade Levels 1-8*. Literacy Volunteers of America, 1979.

Brand new from LVA; lists titles available in your regular collection, which can be used by adult beginning readers.