

NLW ON THE ACADEMIC SCENE

By

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For the past eleven years college and university libraries (along with public, school, and special libraries) have been stimulated into some kind of special activity focusing on a time in April as the National Week called Library. Or have we? If not, this is the time to think about the potential value of NLW to our institutional goals. If we *have* been recognizing NLW, this is the time to plan for a bigger and better 1969 NLW celebration.

According to *Chase's Calendar of Annual Events*, we're currently sharing the fourth-week-in-April spotlight with Good Human Relations, National Coin, National YWCA, Chemical Progress, D for Decency, Jazz, and Tableware. However, the proliferation of special emphasis weeks has not diluted the amount of public attention National Library Week is receiving nor blocked the results which can be directly attributed to NLW activities. In fact, participation in the Week is now so widespread and all communications media, national business, civic, and religious organizations are giving so much attention to this time as a focal point for year-round promotion of libraries and reading that we would have to be blind to overlook the benefits we might be getting through throwing our academic libraries into the celebration.

National Library Week is more than a one week celebration. Obviously, the goals, the needs, the problems are with us year-round and are not met or solved by a once-a-year airing. We can, nevertheless, welcome at least once a year the special attention of the public and turn it to our good use in correcting our inadequacies, establishing better rapport with students, making our administrators, governing officials, and alumni groups aware of the need to expand college library facilities to meet the growing enrollments and expanding curricula.

Some general good can come from the perfunctory attention most of us have fallen into the habit of paying NLW: the annual exhibit of major gifts, the bringing to campus of a well-known author for a tea-and-talk with students, the nod to NLW at the Friends of the Library Dinner with special speaker and special emphasis on the "state of the library" report. These are all worth while and should not be discontinued, but their connection with NLW need not be so artificial or repetitious as to become dull. Different means can be found each year to use NLW to dramatize our objectives. The fact that the expected increase in college student population, along with the explosion of knowledge, demands constant enlargement of facilities and resources just to stand still must continuously be brought to the attention of those supporting libraries. The general climate of interest created by NLW gives us an opportunity to open new avenues of communication with the campus and with the larger community for which we constitute important educational and research resources. Our NLW activities will vary as widely as the specific location and objectives of our institutions. Following are some tested ideas, confined chiefly to the campus community, suggested in the *NLW Local Organization Handbook*.

1. Embark on a campaign for 100 percent registration of all students and faculty.

2. Prepare a simple, yet thorough, Faculty Library Handbook that presents in full the variety and extent of your library's resources.
3. Plan one or more programs on reading or library themes for the campus radio or TV station during NLW.
4. Feature one or more articles about the library (history, resources, collections, future expansion plans, etc.) in the campus newspaper.
5. Conduct a contest, with simple but meaningful prizes, for best personal book collections (in various categories) owned by students; display these during NLW.
6. Arrange a library staff tea for library representatives in the various departments; a library or college bookstore might arrange a tea or social hour for faculty authors, prominently displaying their works.
7. Plan a career-day, with special emphasis on recruitment to the library profession as an NLW event. Enlist the help of undergraduate student advisors. Invite the cooperation and participation of other librarians (special, public, and school) for a discussion of opportunities for the careers in the profession. Allot time for a question-and-answer period; show a film and display materials about the varied specialties in the field. Distribute recruitment literature, including lists of accredited library schools. (Consider opening this event to high school seniors and their guidance counselors.)
8. Arrange colorful displays in the library and elsewhere on the campus: student centers, dining halls, bookstore, theatre, residences, etc.
9. An alumni Book Fund Drive might be launched during NLW as a joint venture of the Alumni Association and the college library. For example, an informative lecture (or panel discussion) on the role of the library in the future of the college might be followed by a reception and a guided tour to show facilities and focus attention on special collections.

Another list of ideas suggested to NLW Headquarters by academic libraries which have tried them would stimulate interest and response on the part of the general public and alumni.

1. Plan an "open to the public" function: an exhibit illustrating how the research facilities of the college library contribute to the area's economic development; a well-publicized debate in the community center (or a panel discussion on the air moderated by the college librarian) on "Liberal Education vs. Specialization"; a forum on creative writing or on the influence of reading and libraries on the quality of community life and education.
2. Invite leaders of business, industry and major organizations in the community to a reception or luncheon honoring faculty members whose books have been published in recent years. A prominent industrialist (or benefactor of the library) might give a speech about the "academic library — an investment in the public interest." This also could be planned in connection with the dedication of a new library facility or the acquisition of a major collection.
3. The librarian could cooperate with the community-wide program (and attract

- public attention) by lending some rare books, etc. for exhibits of public libraries and other smaller institutions. He could also help identify faculty members who are good speakers and urge them to take part in community-wide NLW events or broadcasts.
4. Offer help (as the resource person or writer) to the local NLW Committee in the preparation of an article on some aspect of the college library's function; include facts that will help the public understand *why* libraries play an important part in student education and *why* and *what* the needs are for expanding the library's resources.
 5. In collaboration with other academic librarians, try to place a feature in a paper with statewide circulation about the state's total college library resources; stress what expansion of support and program is needed in the light of statewide plans for development of industry, higher education, etc. Such articles can also be adapted for company publications of major industries throughout the state.
 6. Stories about special collections, how they came about, who gave them and why, should be prepared for radio, TV and consumer press. Automation, participation in interlibrary research projects or pilot demonstration programs also are especially newsworthy. Student leaders serving on an NLW Campus Committee or any activities that will bring them into direct contact with the public should also be publicized.
 7. Urge the editor of the alumni bulletin to feature a comprehensive cover story about the library in the April issue, highlighting the present and anticipated needs brought about by increases in enrollment and faculty, introduction of new disciplines, etc. Provide back-up statements from authorities (including alumni if possible) and make use of current ALA Standards for college — or junior college — libraries as well as pertinent reprints from *College & Research Libraries*. Or, offer the editor a monthly service column, perhaps an appraisal of new and recommended books in each of the fields of study for which the college is noted.

All of the ideas suggested could not be carried out in one week, but their use throughout the year might be planned, implemented, reinforced, or climaxed as a National Library Week feature. You would doubtless have other ideas to add to these. Some suggestions made by Arial A. Stephens in the February 1968 issue and by Jane Carroll McRae in the March 1968 *State Library Newsletter* are even more imaginative and could be adapted to our academic library's objectives. If you haven't already started putting NLW 1969 to work for your library, now is the time to (1) write NLW headquarters in New York for this year's posters, bookmarks, and other aids, (2) consult with librarians in your area and with the NLW Local Committee members¹ for possible cooperative activities, and (3) get your staff together for some creative planning.

1. This year the NLW Chairman for each county is the chairman assigned for North Carolinians for Better Librarians.