

## A School Library Serves the Community in Summer

By DOROTHY H. ELLIS\*

Since Chapel Hill does not have a public library, the elementary school libraries serve a dual purpose in as much as they remain open during the summer months and library service is offered to children of every age. Both elementary school libraries are memorial libraries and are partially supported by the local community chest. The funds for the summer program come entirely from this source.

In Summer of 1956 was the first time the Peter Garvin Library in the Glenwood Elementary School was open to the public. It was open four afternoons each week beginning on June 11 and closing August 3.

The library is an attractive room, well lighted and easily accessible to children of the neighborhood. Although the library is rather small with only 2,100 books, about three hundred children took out summer library cards before classes were dismissed in June. Of this number a few more than two hundred actually used the services of the library during the vacation months. Library users included the following:

Vivian came with her five year old brother, Tommy, both of them browsed for some time. Vivian, a third grader, was interested in biographies. She selected two published by Bobbs-Merrill. Then she asked to sit at the "little round table" to read aloud to Tommy. As she read very fluently, young Tommy gazed about the room. He sat awhile; then stood awhile apparently not listening to a word being read. But each time Vivian paused, Tommy urged, "Read." So Vivian continued for a solid hour. Finally she put the book down. Her voice was tired. This resulted in a strong protest from Tommy and the usual, "Read."

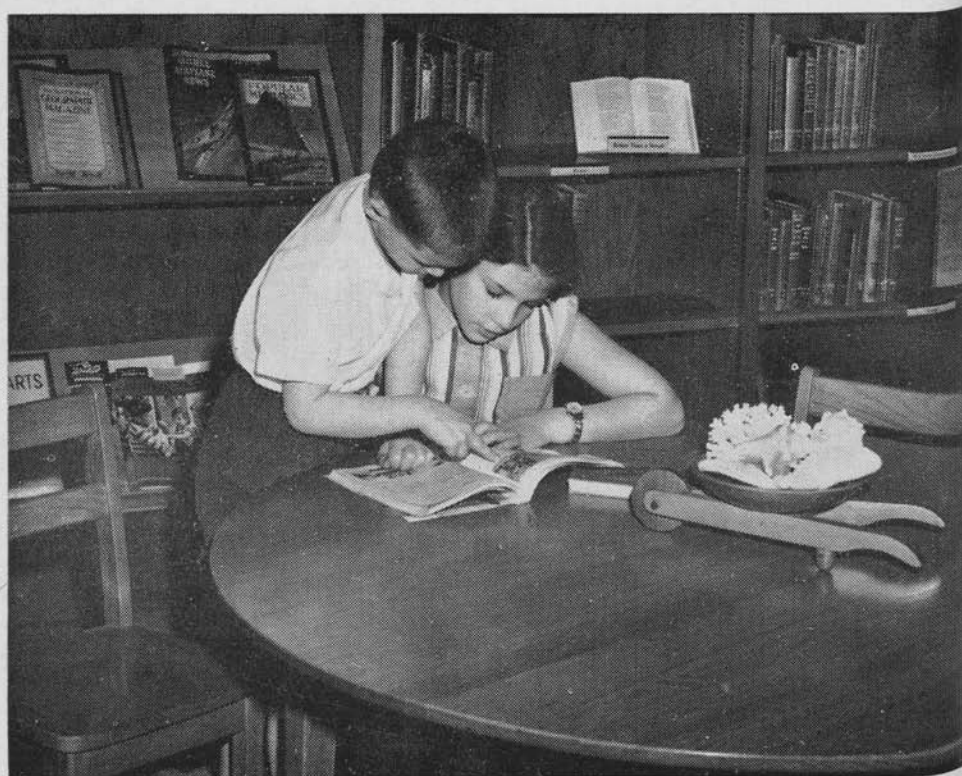
I carefully selected a magazine which I supposed a five year old boy might enjoy. Then I suggested to Tommy that he look at the magazine while Vivian rested. The magazine idea fascinated him. He quickly thumbed through the publication. Then he walked over to the magazine shelf. He finally returned with a copy of *Popular Mechanics*. He looked through the pages quietly for awhile but he turned back toward the first pages and insisted that Vivian stop reading her book. He wanted the captions under each picture read aloud. Vivian agreed. Thus they continued through that afternoon until I told them it was closing time.

Harold, fourth grader, wanted an adventure book full of excitement. I suggested several books. He rejected them. Finally I picked up *The Matchlock Gun*. I told him this book was really an exciting story and I followed with, "there's considerable suspense throughout the story." Harold pushed the book away exclaiming, "Put it back! My mother doesn't let me read suspense stories."

Christine, a first grader, spent one afternoon in the library while her mother took baby brother for a check-up. Christine went directly to the picture book shelves. She carefully selected several books. Then she found a place at the round table where she stayed most of that afternoon.

She had promised her daddy that she'd be a big girl. She surely was. Had I

\*Librarian, Peter Garvin Library, Glenwood Elementary School, Chapel Hill.



Tommy wanted the captions under each picture read aloud.

not known she was in the library, I never would have been aware of her presence. She said hardly a word. She kept herself busy enjoying the books she selected . . . merely looking at the pictures I feel certain, but learning early in life that truly books "are gates to lands of pleasure."

On Friday afternoon we had story hour. We announced that the stories would be geared to children below the fourth grade. We had listeners varying in ages from three to eight years. Between four and thirty children were present each Friday. In our community many families go to the beaches for the week-ends so Friday afternoon proved to be a poor time for the story hours. In another summer we will have story-telling on a different day.

Most children enjoy helping in the library even during the summer vacation time so we had many helpers—some unsolicited. Usually we used two helpers each afternoon. Sometimes the older children wanted to leave at three o'clock to go swimming. One younger child soon noticed that some helpers left early so almost daily, she came by to check on them. She was always eager and most happy to substitute.

When we closed the early part of August thirty books had not been returned. Most of these borrowers had gone away on vacation trips. All of the thirty books were returned when school opened in September.

## NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

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Possibly there are other towns in North Carolina where the school library supplies the only reading material available to children. Vacation time provides a wonderful opportunity to stimulate children to read. It is a time when pre-school children can come to the school and to the library. Guidance is important during the pre-school period as well as during the school life of a child. The present first graders in our school who participated in our summer program are as a whole the most enthusiastic users of the library now. They encourage their classmates to select books they enjoy; they are familiar with the names of several authors and from the first day of class in September, they felt at home in school. The library has served them well.

Older children are already asking to help in the library this summer. They enjoyed the program last year and are looking forward to another happy vacation period of free reading. I strongly recommend that other school libraries give the summer program a try.

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