

"COOPERATION IS THE KEY"

(A Report of North Carolina's Workshop on the new standards, *Public Library Service*)

Librarians and trustees of North Carolina's public libraries profited from a workshop held at Charlotte, N. C. on February 28 and March 1, 1957. Using the new ALA publication, *Public Library Service*, as a basis for thinking and discussion, the workshop participants both absorbed and shared information and ideas. As a result of careful planning and preparation, each session of the workshop led logically into the next. It was an exciting and unique experience for many to find that in thinking together, in using information worked out by the participants, the group moved forward to new conceptions and definite recommendations for action.

In a keynote speech, Dan Lacy, Managing Director of the American Book Publishers Council, described the permanent and central role of libraries.

The Role of the American Public Library

The public library assumes a new importance, Dan Lacy stated, as it realizes fully its unique position in the educational scheme of American life. Society has responded to the urgencies and complexities in modern living by an emphasis on more and better education of the individual. Technological advances force upon us with ceaseless pressure the need in every area to know more and more in order to understand the whole pattern of our existence and to fit the individual securely into the integrated whole.

College education today is as commonplace as high school education was a generation ago. The next logical step in this continuing educational process is one outside the classroom. Here is the unique role and opportunity of the modern public library.

In this age of rapidly developing ideas, automation, and great scientific advances, there is no possible way to teach a student in college today what he will need to know twenty-five years hence. The intellectual habits implanted by formal education must find continuous use and outlet through the avenues provided by the free public library.

Most Americans spend hours every day viewing an image of the world. We're inundated with the image of the world as some one else sees it. We need to think for ourselves. We need to help the man who thinks for himself. The man who will save civilization in its headlong rush to destroy itself is the man who will come up with a new idea which has been allowed to germinate in the confines of an institution. The public library, with its "open door" policy, is such an institution where all views on all questions are allowed to exist side-by-side in a serene atmosphere of impartiality, uncontrolled by a persuasive voice, a charming personality, or the dictatorship of any one medium of communication.

The public library is the only mass medium wholly controlled by its users, where the user is not instructed what and how to think. The library has thousands of sources of ideas. The vitality and freedom of libraries are essential.

The challenge to librarians is to see themselves in these new terms; to acquire those skills and techniques in public relations and promotion which will enable them to interpret and explain the relation of the public library to the community and the individual; and to visualize their libraries as part of a great and useful pattern. As librarians succeed

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in helping their communities to see the public library in these terms, adequate financial support will be made available.

Thus, the public library will play a major role in this process of educating man to see himself in relation to the world about him, and to assume his place as a responsible member of a world society.

Public Library Standards

The standards as set forth in *Public Library Service* were summarized by a panel of librarians questioned by a layman, Walter Spearman, Professor of Journalism at the University of North Carolina. The six general topics presented were: "Structure and Government," "Library Service," "Books and Nonbook Materials," "Personnel," "Organization and Control of Materials," and "Physical Facilities."

Evaluation of North Carolina Libraries

The second session of the workshop was given over to the measurement of North Carolina public libraries. This was done by the individual librarians and trustees, each prepared by a preliminary reading and study of the standards, each checking his library's status and performance on an evaluation sheet. Gathered into small groups, the participants could clarify the items on the evaluation sheet for one another and tabulate their results, so that the whole picture could be reported to the total group.



Photo by Lone Proctor, Jr.

Reporters' Panel: (Left to right) Mrs. Dorothy Thomas, Librarian, Avery, Mitchell and Yancey County Libraries; Mrs. Dorothy Shue, Librarian, Cumberland County Library; Elizabeth Copeland, Librarian, Sheppard Memorial Library (Greenville); Ruth Warncke, Director, Library Community Project, American Library Association; Mrs. Edith Cannady, Librarian, Granville County Library; Jane McDaniel, Librarian, Stanly County Library; Jeannette Trotter, Associate Director, Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.



Photo by Lone Proctor, Jr.

Small Group Discussion

In its evaluation of North Carolina libraries as measured against the standards, workshop members were in total agreement that North Carolina libraries were short of personnel. There was general agreement that libraries did not give the services they should, that books and other materials were inadequately supplied. Most libraries felt insufficiently informed about the communities they served. Half felt that library objectives were understood by staff and boards of trustees, but only a third reported that library objectives were clearly and specifically stated. Inadequate physical facilities were reported by the great majority of libraries.

In voting on priority needs of North Carolina libraries, the groups gave precedence to personnel and services over physical facilities, and placed books and materials even lower on the list.

Summarizing the needs brought out in the measurement process, Mrs. Elizabeth H. Hughey, state librarian, told the group in its third session: "We have come from nothing to not enough; our task is to move from the plateau of not enough to almost enough." "We're at the point where we're thinking beyond our own individual libraries. Cooperation is the key to acquiring materials and providing services not possible alone."

Planning for the Future

The kind of creative thinking required to make plans for the future needed the stimulation of a group. The participants, librarians and trustees from each of five areas of the state, gathered together with a leader and a reporter for each group. Each area group reviewed the obstacles to good library service, the hopeful factors, and made plans for the future. Consultants George Esser of the Institute of Government, Lucile Kelling, Dean of the School of Library Science, and Ruth Warncke, Director of the Library-Community Project of the American Library Association, made themselves available as resource persons for each group. The reporters, one from each group, formed themselves into a panel and brought together the recommendations of all the groups.

The Findings

The greatest obstacles to good library service in North Carolina were agreed to be: lack of money for personnel, materials, and facilities; lack of understanding of the purposes and program of the public library on the part of staff, boards, and general public; lack of willingness to experiment; and the isolation of some units of library service.

Hopeful factors are: strong state resources, including the State Library and State Aid, the University, the Library School; experience in cooperation, including the film circuit, the inter-library loan collections program, workshops; the Library Services Act; the stimulus provided by new library buildings.

Proposals

To improve library service, the group agreed on specific proposals to work on first:

1. To re-think and study the financing of library service.
2. To study our communities to understand their problems and resources.
3. To conduct some cooperative experiments in library service, such as cooperative purchasing and processing, sharing of personnel.
4. To provide in-service training for personnel.
5. To emphasize educational services to adults.
6. To plan a purposeful public relations program.
7. To recruit in every way possible, remembering that librarians may be men as well as women.
8. To reach out and get acquainted with neighboring libraries through informal district gatherings.

"Beginning in 1957 . . ."

Miss Warncke, in a concluding talk, described 1957 as *the* library year. Among many, the most important developments are the Library Services Act and the standards enumerated in *Public Library Service*. She suggested a review of the library's present program, a ruthless elimination of outmoded or ineffective services, and a paring down of routines. In order to be prepared to give modern, expanding service, a librarian should deliberately take time to think and plan, should read professional literature, and learn techniques of working effectively with groups—staff, board, and citizens.

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Some people and institutions, Miss Warncke pointed out, have had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 20th century. Librarians are moving unreluctantly into 1957—the year of the Library Services Act and the Standards—but at a snail's pace, carrying the past on their backs.

An inventory of services rather than of libraries is needed. Do the children need your story hour? Can you eliminate the bookmobile run that accomplishes nothing? There is no heresy in a library—any service can be discarded when it no longer serves its purpose. Knock off a service ruthlessly if you have your eyes on a more valuable service.



Photo by Lone Proctor, Jr.

Speakers and Sponsors: (*Seated, left to right*) Ruth Warncke, Director, Library Community Project, ALA, special consultant; Mrs. Elizabeth H. Hughey, State Librarian, sponsor; Lucile Kelling, Dean, School of Library Science, UNC, sponsor; Olivia Burwell, Chairman, Development Committee, Public Libraries Section, NCLA, sponsor; (*Standing*) Walter Spearman, School of Journalism, UNC, interrogator of panel; Elaine von Oesen, Extension Services Librarian, State Library, workshop coordinator; Dan Lacy, Managing Director, American Book Publishers Council, keynote speaker; Carlyle J. Frarey, Associate Professor of Library Science, UNC, sponsor; and Hoyt Calvin, Director of Libraries, Charlotte and Mecklenburg County; host. Miss Charlesanna Fox, Librarian, Randolph Public Library, Asheboro, and Chairman, Adult Services Committee, Public Libraries Section, NCLA, was also a sponsor.

Simplify routines. Are you still counting circulation cards rather than measuring them with a ruler? Do you paste pockets as if they were to endure forever?

Librarians need time to think. Take an afternoon a week—let the immediate work go—and think of what you are doing, how you can do a better job by planning. Assess what you're doing in terms of its importance.

Take time to rest and be a person.

Read professional literature. You will not know how to give modern library service if you do not know what is said about it.

Learn the techniques of group work. You can save time and get better results if you know how to work with trustees, staff, and—of greatest importance in the new library picture—with the people of your community.

The Plan of the Workshop

The workshop in itself was an example of cooperative thinking and planning. The Adult Services Committee and the Development Committee of the Public Library Section of the North Carolina Library Association, the School of Library Science of the University of North Carolina, and the North Carolina State Library sponsored the workshop. Consultants from the Library School, the Institute of Government, and the American Library Association assisted. A committee of eighteen North Carolina librarians planned it.

The aim was to find the library's proper role in the United States in 1957, to analyze the standards for public library service, to measure North Carolina practice against the standards, and to make a plan for the future. For each part, a method likely to achieve the objective was chosen. Thirty librarians took part in the program. All persons on the program attended a briefing session to help them see their part in relation to the whole. Every one of the eighty-seven librarians and sixteen trustees who were present contributed to the discussion and together decided what seemed most vital and immediate to do.

Reaction of Participants

The impact of the workshop on persons attending was summed up by one librarian: "My library looked at your library and became our library." Librarians and trustees went home with a new sense of direction for their own library program, with a realization of the need for greater cooperation with other libraries, and, above all, with a *will* to try some cooperative ventures.

MRS. LOUELLA S. POSEY

MRS. DOROTHY B. THOMAS

Reporters.