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LITERACY ACTIVITIES IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES, A REPORT OF A STUDY OF SERVICES TO ADULT ILLITERATES.

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FIELD VISITS WERE MADE TO 15 PUBLIC LIBRARIES TO GATHER INFORMATION ON LOCAL SPONSORS OF LITERACY EDUCATION, INCLUDING PERSONNEL, TEACHING METHODS, AND INSTRUCTIONAL AND SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS. PATTERNS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES AND INDIVIDUAL LIBRARIES AND THE ADEQUACY OF LIBRARY SERVICES AND READING MATERIALS WERE INVESTIGATED. IN MOST LIBRARIES SURVEYED, PROGRAMS OF SERVICE OR LIBRARY INVOLVEMENT WERE LIMITED, BUT EACH LIBRARY ENGAGED IN ACTIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING WITH OTHER AGENCIES, INCLUDING WELFARE AGENCIES, THE FEDERAL MANPOWER AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, PRIVATE AND VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, BOARDS OF EDUCATION, READING CLINICS, TELEVISION STATIONS, AND PRIVATE TUTORS. SHORTAGES OF TRAINED PERSONNEL AND EFFECTIVE LITERACY MATERIALS WERE A CRITICAL PROBLEM. RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE--DISTRIBUTION OF EASY-READING BIBLIOGRAPHIES TO ALL PUBLIC LIBRARIES, EXPANSION OF THE ALA ADULT SERVICES DIVISION'S COMMITTEE ON READING IMPROVEMENT FOR ADULTS, A MEETING OF NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LIBRARY LEADERS TO PROMOTE ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY SERVICES, AND A LITERACY SERVICES CONSULTANT AT ALA HEADQUARTERS WERE AMONG THE RECOMMENDATIONS. (LY)

AMERICAN LIBRARY
ASSOCIATION

Literacy activities in public libraries

A Report of a Study of Services to Adult Illiterates

by Bernice MacDonald

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Literacy activities in public libraries

A REPORT OF A STUDY OF SERVICES TO ADULT ILLITERATES

Prepared by means of an award from
the J. Morris Jones-World Book Encyclopedia-ALA Goals Award
to the Adult Services Division
of the American Library Association

by BERNICE MACDONALD

New York 1965

American Library Association

Chicago 1966

Foreword

THE ALA Adult Services Division's Committee on Reading Improvement for Adults, which developed the proposal for the grant under which this study was undertaken, and which has served in an advisory capacity to the field investigator, is pleased to submit Miss Bernice MacDonald's report of her findings.

The Committee wishes to emphasize that this study must be regarded as a pilot study, undertaken as a preliminary step in a projected full-scale investigation of library services to the adult illiterate. It was made at a time when public libraries were first awakening to the possibilities of broadening their services to reach the adult illiterate, and as such includes much that is tentative and experimental.

To obtain information about the current state of literacy training as well as the extent and effectiveness of library services and materials in each city visited, the investigator included observations and interviews of programs and personnel in a variety of adult education agencies other than libraries, giving particular attention to the kinds and uses of materials in these agencies. The study located fifteen libraries which were engaged in specific literacy activities. Of the fifteen, eight libraries showed distinctive patterns of service to the adult illiterate and a level of development which warranted fuller description.

The Committee feels that Miss MacDonald is to be commended for the enthusiasm and perceptiveness with which she carried out her assignment, and believes that, as a pilot study of literacy activities in fifteen libraries, the report may well serve as a benchmark in the development of library services to the adult illiterate.

Katherine L. O'Brien, *Chairman*
Committee on Reading Improvement for Adults
Adult Services Division, American Library Association

October, 1965

Preface

THE BEGINNING of this study can be traced to two seminal books: John Kenneth Galbraith's *Affluent Society* and Michael Harrington's *The Other America.* The first told us that we had the resources to wipe out poverty, and the second, filled with the stories of minorities and the unskilled, lent compassion to the task. Both books were selected as "Notable Books" by the American Library Association and their summons went forth from library book shelves through countless displays, advisory services, book discussions, film, radio and television programs, and all other library media used to communicate and dramatize important ideas. They helped form a national commitment. Some librarians found themselves suddenly supported in plans to develop a long-desired area of service, and many others began seriously assessing their resources for the job. At the center of the problem was the illiterate and the functionally illiterate, the person without the educational tools to become employed, remain employed, motivate his children, or participate in and contribute to society. He was also the person virtually unknown to the educational world of the librarian, publisher, and teacher, but becoming increasingly visible to each of them as a large factor in their library communities, selling markets, and school classrooms.

Coordinated efforts of librarians began with a call from the American Library Association's Adult Services Division in cooperation with the ALA-National Education Association Joint Committee for a meeting in Chicago in July, 1963. That meeting, the Institute on Reading Improvement for Adults, clearly set forth the problems of adult illiteracy and resulted in the establishment of a standing Committee on Read-

ing Improvement for Adults in the Adult Services Division. The Committee* gave priority to the following activities and goals:

to stimulate librarians to realize their responsibilities and their role in an all-out effort to combat illiteracy;
to survey existing library programs for undereducated adults;
to furnish information in support of legislation and cooperative action to extend adult literacy;
to survey existing materials which meet the interests and needs of the undereducated adult, reinforce his skills and establish habits of continuing reading;
to document the great need for more and better instructional and supplementary reading materials for the adult just learning to read.

As a basis for further planning, the Committee first secured profiles of recent experience in serving adult illiterates from libraries selected on the basis both of Committee knowledge and a mail survey. The Committee also asked the librarians in Baltimore, Brooklyn, New York, and Philadelphia to analyze existing materials for use of adults with a reading level of sixth grade or less. The results of this analysis confirmed earlier evidence and led the Committee to conclude that such materials were practically nonexistent in the areas of basic adult education, job skills, family living and American history, government and citizenship. This conclusion also left the Committee powerless to comply with the many requests from all over the country for a bibliography of low reading level materials of adult interest. To alert and stimulate more librarians to the need and possibilities of service to illiterates, the Committee published and distributed the brochure, *Service to Adult Illiterates: Guidelines for Librarians.* In the meantime, the chairman of the Committee engaged in active discussion at publishers' conferences, stressing the urgent need for better materials, adult in concept and geared to meet adult interest at the beginning reading level.

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*Committee members were: Hardy R. Franklin, Bedford Branch Library, Brooklyn, N.Y., Public Library; Dorothy A. Kittel, Library Services Branch, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C.; Winifred B. Linderman, School of Library Service, Columbia University, New York; Mrs. Dorothy E. Shue, Cumberland County Public Library, Fayetteville, North Carolina (later replaced by Eunice Wolfe, Rockwood Branch Library, Portland, Oregon); and Katherine L. O'Brien, Donnell Library Center, New York, N.Y., Public Library. Douglas J. Reid, Bridgeport, Connecticut, Public Library, joined the Committee in 1964.

In 1964, the Committee submitted a proposal for the J. Morris Jones–World Book Encyclopedia–ALA Goals Award. Entitled *Methods and Materials for Public Library Service to Functionally Illiterate Adults,* the project was aimed at stimulating improved public library service to adult illiterates by means of recommendations on needed materials and the preparation of a manual for training librarians. The Committee's proposal did not win the full award, but a partial grant of $7,000 was made to the Adult Services Division, which permitted the more limited study reported here.*

The purpose of this study, which was conducted between November 15, 1964, and March 15, 1965, was to obtain facts on current programs of service to adult illiterates being provided by libraries and other adult education agencies and to formulate proposals and recommendations for further study and action.

The study was carried out by field visits during which the observer sought information about local adult education agencies providing instruction for adult illiterates, including personnel, methods, and instructional and supplemental materials used. She was equally concerned to determine patterns of cooperation between instructional agencies and libraries, and to become informed on what library services and instructional and supplementary reading materials were available or needed.

Fifteen libraries† were selected for visits on the basis of earlier response to the Committee's requests for information and the previously mentioned profiles. In almost all these libraries the actual program of service or library involvement in literacy activity was limited, but each was engaged in active community planning with other agencies. This interagency activity afforded a view of a variety of outside agencie engaged in literacy work and of their relationship with the library. Welfare departments, the federal Manpower Development and Training program, private and volunteer organizations, foundations, boards of education, reading clinics, television stations, and private tutoring were all within the local librarians' sphere of interest and influence. Such a degree of community involvement provided a communications and human relations network vital to making this kind of preliminary study. Grateful acknowledgment is due in full to those particular librarians who were a part of the network as well as to the members of the Committee.

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*See Appendix I for Statement of Study. (pp. 37-38)

†The fifteen libraries were: The Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland; The Brooklyn, N.Y., Public Library; The Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, Charlotte, North Carolina; The Cleveland, Ohio, Public Library; The Cumberland County Public Library, Fayetteville, North Carolina; The Dallas, Texas, Public Library; The Public Library of the District of Columbia, Washington; The Kalamazoo, Michigan, Public Library; The Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Public Library; The New Haven, Connecticut, Public Library; The New York, N.Y., Public Library; The Free Library of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; The St. Louis, Missouri, Public Library; and The Yakima Valley Regional Library, Yakima, Washington.

Contents

chapter 1

Introduction to the study

BEFORE detailing the observations made in this study, the climate in which it took place may well be emphasized. "The difference between teaching children and teaching adults," says Mary C. Wallace president of LARK (Literacy for Adults and Related Knowledge) Foundation, "is the difference between building bridges of stones across a stream. Place the stones close together for children and as wide apart as possible for adults." This simple illustration by one of the country's most knowledgeable teachers of adults, suggests the main difficulty found in the renewed struggle against illiteracy. Experience, training, materials—in effect, the body of knowledge available for teaching reading is almost wholly related to children. An estimated two-thirds of the published materials, teaching manuals, instructional and supplementary books, are designed for children, and the balance, which is specifically intended for use by adults, is still in an elementary stage of development. Teachers of adults come generally from the ranks of primary school teachers who have no formal adult education training or experience and bring with them the methods and attitudes developed in teaching children, or they are volunteers, at times with no training at all. There are some naturally gifted and creative teachers who adapt well to adult needs. They employ imagination in preparing materials for use in their teaching and find extracurricular activities to help motivate their students. Such teachers, however, are not common. Education and welfare agencies severely limit their effectiveness because of paternalistic and unknowledgeable approaches toward the problems of adult illiterates. In other words, to build a bridge in the face of insufficient experience, training, materials, and organization, and to do it quickly to meet the urgent need of millions, is a task of considerable proportions. Happily, this brief study found evidence that the work is well under way, and, more particularly,

that librarians want a part in it and feel responsible for a major contribution to it. The momentum seemed to come from the new-found national commitment, the identification by many groups and agencies, including the library, of a common concern, and the realization that success is possible through cooperative and coordinated effort.

An important impetus in the new drive against illiteracy came from the landmark experiment made by the Cook County, Illinois, Board of Public Aid and the Chicago Board of Education. Stemming from the report published as *The Blackboard Curtain; A Study to Determine the Literacy Level of Able-Bodied Persons Receiving Public Assistance,*[1] this massive attack on illiteracy represented the first major effort to reduce welfare rolls by means of a large, cooperative program of mandatory literacy education. It has served as an example to other welfare departments as well as other agencies of education, health, and welfare.

The *Manpower Development and Training Act of 1963* is another recent milestone in literacy education. With its 5,000 job retraining projects in every part of the country, it has dramatized the fact that millions of people who need job retraining need first to learn to read and write.

The use of television to teach literacy has been yet another dramatic development of recent years. For example, *Operation Alphabet,* the twenty-week series of television lessons produced in Philadelphia, has been shown in 100 cities, including nearly all the largest ones in the United States.

These new approaches have brought with them a more realistic and meaningful standard of measuring illiteracy. Until recently, persons with less than five years of schooling were classified as functional illiterates. On that basis, the 1960 census figures showed that there were 8.3 million persons, twenty-five years of age or over, who were functionally illiterate. Now, the United States Office of Education, with new facts on job retraining, school dropouts, and the labor market, states that persons with less than eight years of schooling are generally unable to understand and communicate adequately in today's world. By the same census, there were 25 million adults, eighteen years of age and over, who were thus handicapped by having less than eight years of schooling.

This is more than a statistic. In human and social terms, it stands for individual hardship and despair, wasted talents, lost productivity, and increased dependency, delinquency, illegitimacy, even disease. Yet, many people think of illiteracy as no more than a residual problem, resulting largely from inadequate educational facilities or insufficient enforcement of compulsory school attendance laws, and assume that, as educational and economic conditions improve, education

1. Published by Science Research Associates, Inc., Chicago, Ill., 1963.

for all children will be achieved and illiteracy eradicated. Of course this is true, but it takes inordinate amounts of patience and insensitivity to human needs to be satisfied with a rate of progress which has reduced absolute illiteracy from 5.7 million to 3 million in ninety years. To increasing numbers of people, this discouragingly slow rate has become unacceptable and their further concern centers today on the more critical problem of functional illiteracy, which has become, in effect, a frightening, creeping disease. With the market for unskilled labor declining steadily as advanced technology creates new jobs requiring higher skills, more and more shocked people are finding themselves categorized in a way they had never expected. Their plight is documented by the unemployment rate, which has remained high and constant during the current and unparalleled 55 months of economic prosperity.

With its new legislation, the federal government has recognized the importance of literacy in adult education. Under the *Economic Opportunity Act of 1964,* public school programs of adult basic education have expanded and will continue to expand, and, as Community Action programs are developed, additional literacy training for adults will become available as components in coordinated programs of many groups and agencies, including private foundations, university extension, health and welfare agencies, and libraries.

As a result of the *Library Services and Construction Act of 1964,* funds have become available which have enabled libraries to direct services to the undereducated and deprived of all ages in both urban and rural areas, and, as materials, techniques, and training are developed, library literacy services for adults will result.

Throughout the present study, this new activity and revitalized national effort in adult literacy was observed mainly at the level, and through the perspective, of the local teacher and librarian. Their ideas, suggestions, and attitudes about materials and library services were sought directly. Results of interviews with teachers and librarians and brief descriptions of selected library activities follow as the major part of this study. Further, more extensive studies at the vital trustee, city administration, and state library levels are needed in order to round out our knowledge of both current and needed programs of service to adult illiterates.

chapter 2

Summary of interviews with teachers

TEACHERS of illiterates formed the largest single group interviewed for the study. Thirty-three interviews were held, generally before class, during class breaks, or after class. Occasionally, there were also opportunities for leisurely office discussions with teacher supervisors.

Sixteen teachers were functioning in Board of Education programs, five were part of the Manpower Development and Training programs, seven were in volunteer programs, three in welfare departments, and two were private tutors. Questions were designed to gain information about types and sources of materials, particularly supplemental materials. about motivations and characteristics of students, and about teachers' backgrounds and ideas concerning materials and library service.

Many classes were observed and enjoyed, but it was beyond the scope of the study to describe or evaluate teaching methods or general effectiveness of teaching programs. Presence of the observer at class did, however, provide the most stimulating aspect of the study, because it was there, observing and often talking to students, that illiteracy in its most human terms was revealed.

For instance, in the Milwaukee Public Welfare Department, the observer attended a graduation class of mothers, welfare recipients under an Aid to Dependent Children program. A six-week course in *Words in Color* had just been completed. (This is a new approach to reading developed by Caleb Gattegno, in which each sound of English is represented by a distinctive color.[1]) The group sounded and looked like any neighborhood group of women, meeting perhaps for a club program or a political talk. Good grooming and articulateness were general. When

1. See *Wilson Library Bulletin,* v.40 (September, 1965), p. 62-63.

this observation was made the supervisor of the program gave detailed examples concerning clothes, cleanliness, and attitude, as evidence that these same women showed every indication of laziness, lack of interest, and suspicion at the beginning of the course. When diplomas were presented by the guest from the American Library Association, tears of pride were observed in many eyes. Most of these women would now be able to begin vocational training, the chief motivational factor among them, according to the supervisor. Applications for library cards were filled out, and, in helping one elderly woman to complete hers, it was noticed that eleventh grade was given as the highest grade achieved in Mississippi. To the remark, "I guess they don't teach much reading in Mississippi," she answered, "Honey, they don't teach nothin' in Mississippi, just pickin' that cotton." The supervisor had figures which showed that over 50 per cent of the class was born in Mississippi.

In Yakima, Washington, another student, an alert twenty-three-year-old truck driver, said that he and his parents are surprised to this day that he didn't learn to read. He was the eldest of several children and all the others had learned. He had gone through grammar school but, he said, "After I didn't learn reading in the first grades, it was never presented again and now I have to have it for all the billing and paper work on the truck."

The candor and self-confidence in students generally proved to be the biggest surprise and happiest revelation of the study. In considering as a whole the literacy activity observed, it was clearly evident that the Negro drive for civil rights was helping to shape the character and direction of that activity. The majority of students were Negroes and this attitude of candor and self-confidence could be recognized as part of a new self-respect and purpose. A part of that healthy condition was due also to the obvious relationship of mutual respect between some teachers and their students. One teacher said that she always looked for that all-important reason which brought the individual to school, and then she related materials, method, and her own understanding to that end. At the time, she was working individually with a woman who had told her that her daughter had moved away and been married and she wanted to write to her "personal-like."

This study, like many others, showed that the most common reason given by adults for wanting to learn to read is related to employment. The next most frequently given is related to children. Either the parent doesn't want the child to know that he can't read, or he wants to set a good example and encourage the child in his own education. Many times a strong desire to read the Bible or to vote or to take part in community affairs is given as a reason. One man in a Charlotte, North Carolina, class, who reminded the observer of Jersey Joe Walcott, is memorable not only for his attractiveness, but because he represented many of the

characteristics of adult illiteracy. He was in his forties, a veteran of Iwo Jima, and currently the well-paid supervisor of fifty men in a tire recapping business. When asked why he was in school, he replied in serious, measured tones, "Jobs are getting just a little too tight." His boss had told him to learn to read and write or lose his job. When asked why he hadn't gone to school before (meaning adult school), he said, "I went to school right here in Charlotte for eight years as a kid, but not in a row. I didn't think it was important then, but I do now; everybody does." He and the teacher and the librarian had become good friends and it was obvious that he would learn to read.

RESULTS OF CHECKLIST FOR INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS[2]

Total interviews: 33

1. *What materials do you use?*

It was found that basal readers from elementary schools were used frequently.[3] Adult materials such as *Streamlined English*, by Frank C. Laubach; *Operation Alphabet; TV Home Study Book*, published by the National Association of Public School Adult Educators; and *Adult Reader*, by M. S. Robertson were also found in use in a variety of classrooms. Twelve teachers were using teacher-prepared materials, two of them exclusively, and ten in addition to published materials. Ten of these teachers were in Board of Education programs and two were private tutors. Twelve teachers wrote or assembled materials themselves, while all teachers reported that they brought printed materials to their classes from such sources as government agencies, private companies, advertisements, etc. No programmed instruction or audio-visual materials were found in use in the classrooms visited during this study.

2. *How are materials supplied?*

Most materials in Board of Education and government programs were loaned to the students, while volunteer programs sold theirs at nominal cost. Very few materials were given away. The comment often heard was that students took pride in paying for their books, even if they could manage only partial payments.

3. *Are you satisfied with the materials you use?*

No teacher was completely satisfied with materials. Many qualified their replies by saying that instructional materials at the beginning level

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2. For full interview schedule, see Appendix III, p. 40.

3. A list of the materials most frequently found in use in classrooms is given as Appendix II, p. 39.

seemed to them relatively unimportant, that they "got the job done." These teachers added that supplementary materials were beyond the ability and available time of beginning students. Three teachers were very critical of the materials they used, characterizing them as inappropriate, and saying that they relied on them very little, preferring to use their own materials or to teach with chalk illustrations directly from the board.

4. *Are you familiar with most available materials in this field?*
Every teacher, with the exception of five teacher supervisors, said that they were not familiar with most available materials. The supervisors had more responsibility for the selection of materials to be used in class, and each had at hand bibliographies and examples of new materials sent by publishers. However, they commented often about the difficulty of keeping abreast of new materials and evaluating them.

5. *Do you use the public library in connection with this course?*
Seven teachers said that they were frequent users of the public library, three of them adding that they were usually seeking books or information for a student. Eighteen answered "occasionally," five "not at all." Three said that they used the school library instead of the public library.

6. *Do your students use the public library?*
Nine teachers said that their program included an introductory visit to the library each year. Fourteen said that their students did not use the public library, or they didn't think so. Three said that there was individual use in addition to class visits. Seven said that they had no way of knowing this.

7. *In what way can the public library aid literacy education?*
Most teachers responded to this question as if they had not previously considered it, appearing to find it difficult to provide specific examples. When the interviewer offered some suggestions, such as special collections for the teacher, easy-reading for the student, library space for class visits, the teachers generally agreed that any service from the library would be welcomed. Four teachers stressed the importance of the library in providing continuing reading for new literates. Only three teachers emphasized the importance of the library to their own professional development or awareness.

8. *Do your students request additional materials to take home?*
There were sixteen affirmative answers to this question. Two teachers said that students requested additional reading material "once in a while" and "very occasionally"; the rest answered in the negative.

9. *Do any of your students become regular library users?*
Only one, a teacher in the LARK program, where the Yakima, Washington, Public Library had been involved since the program's inception in 1958, could give a confident affirmative answer. Most teachers answered to the effect that they had no way of knowing.

10. *Have you had any special (i.e., formal) training in teaching adults; if so, where?*
None of the teachers interviewed said that they had any formal training in teaching adults. Some had received some limited in-service training and guidance, mainly in Board of Education programs. A few had some previous experience in working with adults, one in social work, three in volunteer work, and one had taught floral design to employees of a chain of flower stores. Almost all professional teachers had trained for elementary school teaching and many of them were currently teaching children in the daytime and adults at night. In only three of the places visited was a source of formal training known by the teachers: New York (Columbia, New York University); Washington, D.C. (American University); Dallas (Baylor University).

11. *What reasons do your students give for coming to class?*
This question elicited a variety of interesting stories, some of which are referred to in the preceding section. Teachers reflected their general admiration and enjoyment of the students during these moments. Most felt that they make better progress when the student knows that his individual situation is understood by the teacher.

chapter 3

Summary of interviews with librarians

FIFTEEN librarians answered questions designed to reveal the character of their work in combating illiteracy, and expressed opinions on staff interest and training in work with adult illiterates and the possibilities of developing library literacy services. A large part of the interview had to do with materials and is reported in Chapter 5: *Materials.* Information concerning selected programs of service was gathered through observation and discussion with a variety of additional librarians involved in the programs. That information is included in Chapter 6: *Selected Examples of Library Literacy Activities.*

The fifteen librarians, speaking for the libraries selected for field visits, were adult services supervisors, adult education specialists, community librarians, and directors of three medium-sized libraries. These librarians were immediately responsible for planning and development of service to adults, and therefore responsible for guiding their libraries during the current period of national focus and increased possibilities for aiding the undereducated population. They showed knowledge of the needs of adult illiterates, a deep concern for the problems involved, and a sense of urgency about their objectives. All were currently absorbed in a process of analysis, exploration, and experimentation. A common attitude found among them was a determination to act now, to participate in the local activities and the national effort, a willingness, if you will, to experiment and to make mistakes along with others, but to contribute the library's share. One said, "It's finally legitimate to do what we should have been doing all these years." Another, "If there's anything closer to library goals than motivating the non-reader, I don't know what it is." And another, "We'll do this, because it is too important not to. The staff will just have to develop."

The problem of securing qualified staff to work in adult literacy programs was considered by the majority of those interviewed the most difficult long-term barrier to progress. Many of those who despaired of finding enough professional librarians discussed the possibility of recruiting a subprofessional group or using personnel from other disciplines. Adequacy was measured more in terms of quality than numbers of personnel. One librarian said that she worked on the "feet wet" principle and was looking for all possible opportunities to involve librarians in work with illiterates. "In the end," another said, in a slightly dissenting voice, "it's a matter of leadership and morale, not time or materials, or even staff."

Several of these librarians held high positions, but these positions still were not broad enough in scope to guide such matters as staff training, book selection, and administrative policy. This was less true among those having the adult services title, who, in this case, foresaw little difficulty in bringing easy-reading materials into book collections, training staff through carefully planned meetings, and influencing the library's direction as important policy advisors.

RESULTS OF CHECKLIST FOR INTERVIEWS WITH LIBRARIANS[1]

Total interviews: 15

1. *Is your community leadership concerned about illiteracy?*
Seven librarians felt that their community leadership was strongly concerned about illiteracy; six answered "moderately concerned"; two "mildly concerned." The strongly concerned communities were predominantly in the large eastern metropolitan cities.

2. *Is your library administration, as a whole, concerned about illiteracy?*
Twelve librarians said their library administration was strongly concerned, while three answered "moderately."

3. *What is the nature of your library's role in literacy activities?*
Three described a role which included community leadership, joint programming, joint planning, and special library programs. All fifteen claimed the three roles of joint programming, joint planning, and library programs. Two libraries, found clearly displaying leadership roles, were in cities where strong concern about illiteracy was not apparent to the interviewer. The activities of these two libraries, the Kalamazoo Public

1. For full interview schedule, see Appendix IV, pp. 41-42.

Library and the Cumberland County Regional Library, are described in Chapter 6.

4. *What are your independent library activities?*
Eight libraries had film, music, and lecture programs planned specifically with the illiterate in mind. One library had a reading improvement clinic. Three libraries had specialized advisory services. Three libraries had reading aloud groups. Four libraries had special collections for the student and two had special collections for the teacher. Eight libraries participated in some kind of research, such as a community study or a library experiment. Staff members in seven libraries were involved in special committee work in ALA, NEA, AEA, or on publishers' councils.

5. *Which library role do you think is particularly appropriate?*
All librarians thought that each of the roles mentioned was appropriate, although many stressed the importance of joint programming. The "reaching" and "teaching" aspects of literacy programs were mentioned often as activities beyond the library's current ability, except as the library participated in coordinated programs with other agencies fulfilling these functions. Because literacy is fundamentally a matter of books and reading, library leadership was considered particularly appropriate in the area of illiteracy.

6. *Which library activities do you think are particularly appropriate?*
Although all the library activities were considered appropriate, most librarians described activities that included joint programming. The general feeling expressed regarding research was that studies and experiments waste time, and that action was needed, using whatever resources were available.

7. *Is there increasing interest in work with illiterates among staff members?*
Six librarians said that there was rapidly increasing interest among staff members. Six answered "moderate." Three thought that interest was slow in developing.

8. *Does your library offer any staff training for work with adult illiterates?*
Only one library, the New York Public Library, offered staff training beyond general information and orientation in meetings, or some "on-the-spot" guidance with class visits. In New York, a promotional seminar meeting is regularly devoted to work with adult classes learning reading. Part of an in-service training requirement for librarians advancing to a senior adult librarian position, the meeting introduces

librarians to the New York City public school program of adult reading classes and the library's cooperating program of class visits. Librarians learn how to schedule visits, select easy-reading materials for lending, and prepare appropriate talks of welcome and information about the library and its resources.

9. *What materials do you supply adults at the beginning reading level?*
Eight libraries supplied instructional self-help materials. Fourteen supplied supplementary adult materials. All supplied juvenile materials.

10. *Are you satisfied with the materials supplied?*
All librarians were in solid agreement that the materials were unsatisfactory in quality and quantity. They stressed the need particularly for good supplementary materials. One librarian said that "becoming readers" was more important than learning only "to read." Several librarians used the phrase "continuing reading," one saying, "Everyone else wants illiterates to read so that they can get a job or stay off the relief rolls, but the library wants to make sure that continuing reading is not forgotten."

11. *Are the materials supplied mainly adult, juvenile, or evenly divided?*
Four libraries supplied mainly adult instructional, self-help materials. Eleven supplied mainly supplementary juvenile and adult materials. Eight of these eleven supplied mainly juvenile supplementary materials, while the other three supplied materials evenly divided between juvenile and adult. It was apparent that policies or attitudes against supplying instructional books in many libraries stemming from long-established avoidance of textbook materials in public library collections, carried over to the self-help variety. One library emphasized the opposite attitude, saying that an important part of their policy was to supply self-help books. This was the Cleveland Public Library, which was unique among all fifteen libraries, since as a school district library, it is legally responsible for supplying books to Cleveland public school classes of adult education.[2] While all fifteen libraries use juvenile books in their adult activities, four apparently attempt to refrain from wholesale use.

12. *Has your library made any recent policy or procedural change in relation to adult illiterates?*
Simplified registration by means of a stamp identifying students as class members was found in use with adult illiterates in four libraries. In one library an application form different from that used regularly was in-

2. It provides sets of books, both instructional and supplementary, for classes or individual teachers or students. The demands on this collection have increased significantly in recent months because of requests from Manpower Development and Training classes and new classes in private industry.

volved, requiring name and address only. The school provided the rest of the information, that is, phone number, occupation, and reference. In three libraries, registration was expedited through arrangements between teachers and librarians. The library's application form, in one of these arrangements, was used as a class lesson.

Three libraries were using easy-book shelves. Many librarians disliked the idea of separating or labeling these books in any way, on the basis that it would embarrass the adult to be so readily identified. One library made an interesting change in book selection policy. Its policy had previously specified that all books purchased had to be duplicates of titles in their central library, so in order to buy some low quality, high interest materials for a new branch in a poor neighborhood, this requirement was dropped. In several variations on this theme, selection standards were stretched downward, although policy was not changed. One library had a branch card catalog in which appropriate adult and juvenile materials were graded and classified according to reading levels.

13. *In your opinion, will your library make progress in developing service in this area in the near future?*

Ten librarians felt that significant progress would be made. This judgment seemed to be based mainly on their conviction that this was the way the library must go. They were fully aware of already increased publishing, community and government activity, and of the professional response nationally. References were made often to the *Library Journal* issue on "War on Poverty."[3] Although they expressed the same general conviction, there were three librarians who felt that their progress would be slow. Two librarians said their progress would depend on whether they received government financial support. At the time of the interview, proposals had been made by their two libraries for a reading consultant service, under Title I of the *Economic Opportunity Act of 1964*, but each had been part of a total community program which was still being formulated.

14. *If the answer to the last question was "slow," what is the main reason or reasons?*

All three librarians gave inadequate staff as their reason for anticipating slow progress.

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3. *Library Journal*, v.89 (September 15, 1964), p. 3239 ff.

chapter 4

Summary of interviews with library directors

IN talking with nine library directors, the interviewer attempted mainly to assess the importance or priority which they gave to service to the illiterate in relation to other library projects. Often, meetings were brief and only the following three questions were consistently asked:

1. What are the largest concerns facing the library now, both short-term and long-range?
2. How important is it for your library to serve functionally illiterate adults?
3. How much progress do you expect to make in this area in the near future?

The answers to these questions showed that six directors clearly felt that this service was extremely important, a top priority concern, vital to the future health of their libraries. Two felt that it was important, but not necessarily vital or urgent. One felt that the future direction of the public library was in organization for higher research, and that the other end of the spectrum demanded attention but not concern.

Perhaps the most significant result gained from talks with directors was seen in the general reaction to the question about progress. Expressions of frustration were common in discussing immediate plans for action. Lack of personnel and the right kind of personnel were mentioned continually as almost insurmountable problems. Lack of "know-how" was given often as a reason for postponement of action. The community worker concept was cited as a possible beginning, but doubts were raised about the ultimate effectiveness of this worker in library terms and whether or not this worker should be a professional librarian.

The *Economic Opportunity Act* was not seen generally as an imminent boon to library literacy service due to a lack of local community coordination in making proposals for the federal funds. Among the majority, however, the rather pessimistic outlook did not seem to derive from a lack of will, since five directors had begun work in spite of the difficulties. The pessimism seemed to come from a lack of ideas as to how to proceed and not from a lack of interest or familiarity with the problem in general.

chapter 5

Materials

THROUGHOUT the study, particular attention was paid to the types and uses of materials. In addition, the observer asked both teachers and librarians for their suggestions and ideas about subjects, format, and style of writing.

As stated earlier, it was found generally that teachers, except for teacher supervisors, lacked a wide familiarity with adult materials, especially supplemental reading. Librarians, on the other hand, knew materials well enough to be discouraged by them. This often resulted in less effective work than was actually possible. All available materials had not been brought into use and too much reliance was placed on less appropriate juvenile books or the older, well-known books directed at the foreign-born, such as the Noble and Noble Adult Education Series and their Self-Help Series. For instance, some libraries did not have such materials as the Reader's Digest Series, *Four Beginning Readers for Adults,* the Laubach newspaper, *News for You,* or recent publications from Holt, Rinehart and Winston's Adult Basic Education Series.

Except in a few libraries, the teacher's need for professional materials was sadly neglected. Books on adult psychology and teaching methods were scarce, even in special education collections. In addition, librarians often omitted the consideration of this need from their future plans and programs.

The whole question of adult sensitivity and possible embarrassment held a considerable importance in librarians' thinking. Juvenile books were placed in camouflaging covers, easy-book shelves or separate sections were generally eschewed, and reader's advisory work appeared limited and stiff because of this concern.

Neither librarians nor teachers were able to provide many specific suggestions about subjects, format, and the style of writing needed in

easy reading materials for adults, with the exception of books dealing with basic job skills and consumer education, which were mentioned with consistent frequency. One teacher was in the process of writing a town directory for use by her students. It was to include basic information about locally available public and private services. In format, all wanted more professionally designed materials with good print, paper, and illustrations. Certainly, they agreed that much of the existing material is cheaply constructed and dull in appearance. A more interesting, dramatic style of writing was frequently requested. A teacher in Washington, D.C., gave this illustration of the style he would like:

This is collective bargaining.
This is a picket line.
See the boss see the picket line.
See the boss run.
Run boss run.

How appropriate this prose is, from an educational standpoint, may be questioned, but it does have drama and humor, two qualities which are noticeably absent in most materials.

Everyone encountered, it seemed, was aware that there was increased publishing activity. However, many teachers wondered where the results were, the teacher supervisors worried about having new books tested and evaluated, and the librarians were trying to guess how long it would take before a sufficient supply of good materials became available. The observer learned in a visit to a major United States Office of Education research project in evaluating literacy materials, being carried out at Ohio State University, that new instructional materials were appearing continually and that it would indeed be difficult to select and evaluate them. The report from that project should provide an important and necessary new tool for librarians.[1] Publishers such as Follett Publishing Company and Holt, Rinehart and Winston have extensive programs planned for a variety of books in adult basic education, but indications are that supplemental reading, with its smaller, less immediate market, will not appear as rapidly. Librarians, for a time, will have to search out all existing adult materials and continue to supplement these with some carefully selected juvenile books.

Programmed learning, both books and the machine type, is another aspect of materials which will have to be carefully considered by teacher and librarian. Little research has been done on the use of programmed learning in fundamental education, since it is still in a developmental

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1. Robert F. Barnes and Andrew Hendrickson, *A Review and Appraisal of Adult Literacy Materials and Programs* (Cooperative Research Project No. G-029). Center for Adult Education, College of Education, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, c.1965.

stage. Much that is currently available is inferior. No programmed learning was found in use during the study, but there is no doubt that this is a growing field which could make a large contribution to literacy education. While many teachers seem to feel that the lack of student-teacher relationship diminishes its effectiveness, its potential for library use is a provocative consideration.

Although it was beyond the scope of the study to include a consideration of teaching methods, a brief comment is included here, since methods are so closely related to materials and library service. Considerable confusion, concern, and, at times, anxiety were found about the subject of methods of teaching adults to read. Apparently, there are many methods, perhaps as many as there are teachers. It is generally agreed that there can be no one method that is correct, preferred, or recommended. A combination is used by most teachers. The difficulty lies in the lack of definition and understanding of a variety of methods. Discussion of the subject is both imprecise and unconstructive, yet clear information and guidance are needed for the large number of teachers who are now at work and will be at work in the near future. The United States Office of Education estimates that between 80,000 and 90,000 teachers will be needed for fundamental adult education in the next few years. This means that librarians, in working to combat illiteracy, and specifically to provide support for the training of teachers of adults, will need more information about and understanding of this particular aspect of the problem. In order to bring professional information to teachers effectively, librarians will need library science courses and in-service training to increase their own professional knowledge and skills. This is an area in which accurate and up-to-date information is needed immediately, and opportunities for librarians to become prepared to provide it are equally essential.

chapter 6

Selected examples of library literacy activities

The Kalamazoo Public Library,[1] *Kalamazoo, Michigan*

In Kalamazoo, Michigan, a prosperous city of nearly 100,000 population, community leadership and civic pride are easily observable factors. About three years ago, the Kalamazoo Community Relations Board made a study of the problem of illiteracy in the Kalamazoo area. Before that time, illiteracy had been considered a Southern or foreign problem by most Midwesterners and they were shocked to find that almost 3,000 of their adults were totally illiterate and 7,500 were functionally illiterate. A direct result of that study was the establishment of the Kalamazoo Public Library's Adult Reading Center. The library, which is held in high esteem locally, responded to the community need with vigorous leadership, and has become in a year's short time the coordinating agency in the literacy effort locally and a leader in library literacy service nationally.

The library's response began when Mrs. Marion Spencer, assistant in the Young Adult Department, started to attend meetings of the Kalamazoo City-County Youth Committee, because of her interest in offering more service by the Young Adult Department to dropouts and potential dropouts. A number of book lists were compiled for background reading for adults on problems of young people in a changing social and economic culture. Out of her work on this committee came a request for material on how to read, and how to improve reading skills, to give to Aid to Dependent Children mothers enrolled in a Home and Family Living course. As she began to look in the Kalamazoo library and then in other city libraries and education centers, Mrs. Spencer discovered

1. See also *Wilson Library Bulletin,* v.40 (September, 1965), p. 78-79.

the dearth of this kind of material, and the lack of information and guidance in literacy education generally. After three months of preliminary investigation it was decided in a conference with the Director of the library, Mr. Mark Crum, that the library should attempt to provide a reading center for adults.

The director was able to allocate $1,000 immediately and to provide library space for the new center. The budget was limited but it permitted Mrs. Spencer to purchase single copies of almost all existing adult materials for the student, plus many titles of professional interest to the teacher. A few examples of the less-expensive programmed learning and audio-visual materials were also purchased, such as the *Student Tutor Library of Matching Exercises,* several Stanley Bowman sets of filmstrips, and phonograph records on reading sounds. The space allocated was both attractive and practical. It was in a restful carpeted room on the street floor of the modern, centrally located main library, with enough floor space to accommodate group work comfortably.

In establishing the center Mrs. Spencer devoted much of her own time in tireless developmental work, while carrying on her responsibilities in the Young Adult Department. Gradually, the urgency and momentum of the developing reading center took precedence and she was given wider responsibilities in coordinating adult reading services.

Mrs. Spencer brings a particularly valuable background to this work. A recent library school graduate, she had had years of experience and training as an art museum director and an elementary school teacher. Along with a knowledge of teaching methods, as an art specialist she is sensitive to the format and illustration of materials. As one of the most unique features of the center, she has organized a group of twelve professional women to write and design adult teaching and supplemental materials.[2]

During the initial stages of establishing the center, Mrs. Spencer investigated personally many sources of information at such places as a conference on Adult Literacy Education at the University of Virginia; a literacy symposium at Flint, Michigan; the Michigan Reading Center, Lansing, Michigan; and literacy authorities in Washington, D.C. She attended reading conferences where she observed demonstrations of three approaches to teaching reading: *The Laubach Method, Words in Color,* and the *Initial Teaching Alphabet.*[3] Brochures of information and publicity statements were prepared. A union list and a bibliography of materials followed. Two special projects, The American Association of

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2. An example of these materials, *Baby Care,* by E'Lane Wingerson, illus. by Jane Hicks, may be obtained from the Kalamazoo Public Library, 315 South Rose Street, Kalamazoo, Michigan, for $.60.

3. See *Wilson Library Bulletin,* v.40 (September, 1965), pp. 51-53, 62-63.

University Women's Writing Group and a monthly newsletter for adult students called *New Reader*, were launched.

Expanded and improved programming in cooperation with the local Board of Education became a major part of the center's activity, including visits to the center by teachers and students individually and in groups, and informational and training seminars for teachers.

There is also continuing work with a televised program of *Operation Alphabet*. Mrs. Spencer is a member of a local committee formed to plan and direct the utilization of the program. Follow-up groups of "television students" continue their instruction in a local church, with the library and volunteer teachers contributing their services.

Students from the Western Michigan University Library School, located in Kalamazoo, use the center for term projects, contributing another unique feature. This activity should provide a kind of "feedback" in training librarians to develop services and materials in adult literacy.

The library has adopted a carefully worked-out statement about the center which reveals its philosophy and objectives clearly.

I. Service to literacy teachers.
   A. Provision of sample materials.
      1. Teaching materials and aids for the teacher's use.
      2. Teaching materials for the student's use.
   B. Information (brochures and articles) about training courses, workshops, and conferences on literacy education.
   C. Provision of space in the library for literacy classes conducted by qualified agencies or individuals other than the library staff.

II. Service to literacy students.
   A. Provision in quantity of self-help materials (those materials such as films, filmstrips, records, and tapes which the student can use by himself without the help of a teacher).
   B. Provision in quantity of high interest, low difficulty reading materials to stimulate the continuing progress of the beginning reader.
   C. Provision of traditional library personal reading guidance through interviews with new readers and compilation of suitable book lists.

III. Operation of an informational clearing house and calendar for Kalamazoo on available or proposed literacy programs.

IV. Provision of a staff person and a place for housing materials for literacy students and teachers.

V. Presentation of programs to interest and involve new readers, especially film programs and book talks.

VI. Cooperation with other community agencies in the support of literacy teachers, students, and new readers.

A. This might extend to the calling of periodic meetings of interested community people to display materials or share information as a means of stimulating use of the materials.

VII. Possible establishment of a clinic and laboratory for developmental reading, as an aid to increasing a reader's speed and comprehension.

The library excludes from its objectives the conduct of literacy classes by library personnel, and emphasizes, as a fundamental part of its service, stimulation, guidance, and aid to the teacher. It recognizes the teacher's immediate needs and the immediate and effective service it can render.

But most significantly, in Kalamazoo it is the library which is getting the job done locally, and at the same time gathering information, experience, and skills in a field where they are overwhelmingly lacking.

The Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland, Ohio

On January 25, 1965, the Cleveland Public Library began participation in an experimental project to test the effectiveness of *Words in Color,* a method designed to teach students to read through their association of a certain sound with a certain color. The project involved 400 functionally illiterate adults, more than 100 citizen volunteers, and many public agencies in the greater Cleveland metropolitan area.

The library was an active participant from the inception of the project through the membership of its Adult Education Specialist, Fern Long, on the Board of Directors of PACE (Plan for Action by Citizens in Education), the organization which initiated and directed the project.

Space in the main library was offered and used to house the project in the first of three one-week phases. This first phase provided for the training of eighteen volunteer teachers in the *Words in Color* method. Dorothea Hinman of *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* publisher of the *Words in Color System,* served as instructor. The second phase moved out of the library to established teaching locations where Dr. Hinman observed the trainee teachers in practice teaching situations. The third phase brought the new teachers out into the community where they taught groups recruited from neighborhoods in what was now known to the public as the "Right to Read Program." Several of these sessions were held in branch libraries and some of the students were recruited through library advertising.

At the conclusion of the three weeks, no definitive evaluation of *Words in Color* as a teaching method was made, but its value as an accessible and generally applicable "package program" with which to make a start was obvious: contact was made with many illiterate adults; individuals and organizations with little or no knowledge of the human aspects of illiteracy were initiated into a program where they

gained some valuable first-hand experience and training; some organizations continued literacy activity on their own after the experiment was completed. For instance, the library enlarged upon its original role in two ways:

1. Establishing an advanced course in *Words in Color* at the main library. This course was conducted by the director of the original experiment. The library made its contribution by providing a variety of supplementary reading materials for loan to this group. Practically all the materials were selected from the library's juvenile book stock and proved to be of little interest to the students. The director said that even these books, which were about fourth grade level, were too advanced for the group.
2. Beginning two reading aloud groups, one at the main library and the other at a neighborhood branch.

From the experience with the advanced course in *Words in Color,* the library learned that the children's books which were selected could not be used effectively in work with adult illiterates because they were too advanced.

From the experience with the reading aloud groups, where librarians were fully in charge, much was learned because so little of this work had previously been done or recorded by librarians. As a follow-up on one course, the librarian of the Carnegie West Branch, Katherine Prescott, met with a group of men who had finished the advanced course, to read aloud for an hour a week. In her report,[4] Miss Prescott states that "the purpose of this experimental project was to help the members continue reading after the completion of the PACE class, to establish a relationship between them and the public library, and for the branch librarian to learn about the needs and capacities of so-called functional illiterates. . . . The reading was a cooperative group effort; we gave hints to the members reading aloud, sounded words within words and rhymed vowel sounds. When we were really stumped the leader would write the word on the blackboard, and we'd work it out together." Miss Prescott's report gives many examples of student characteristics and reactions observed during the six sessions she met with her group of eight men.

An important beginning was made in the essential task of testing individual books. Children's books such as *Travelers All, Wings, Wheels, and Motors. Fathers at Work,* and *The Story of Early Cleveland* were read with varying interest and difficulty. It was found that the men preferred books with large print and profuse illustration, but as Miss Prescott states emphatically, "This experience underlines the fact that there is a vast need for simple books of interest to adults of limited

4. See Appendix V, p. 43 ff.

education." Further benefits derived from the experience by the library are evident in her conclusions that "Librarians need to have a way to know these readers personally, and there must be some means worked out so that they in turn can learn to feel at home in the library. . . . As a librarian it was illuminating to see on the one hand the reading difficulties of these men; their slowness, their trouble with sounds, especially vowels, and on the other their courage and innate ability, and to realize what a terrible tenacity is required for an adult to catch up on his fundamental education."

In participating in the *Words in Color* experiment, the Cleveland Public Library has contributed to the area of basic research in education, a progressive role indeed for the public library, and in continuing literacy activity after the experiment concluded, it has displayed a certain tenacity of its own.[5]

The Cumberland County Public Library, Fayetteville, North Carolina

The literacy program of the Cumberland County Public Library was developed as a result of the Library-Community Project of 1955-1960. This American Library Association project, supported by a grant from the Fund for Adult Education, was designed to assist librarians in developing long-term adult education programs based on the analysis of community needs. The Cumberland County Public Library was a pilot library in this project for which the North Carolina State Library received a grant in 1958-1960. The study found that the greatest community need in Cumberland County, North Carolina in 1960 was literacy education: 45.1 per cent of their county population had less than eight years of schooling, and the study highlighted the fact by relating it to other community ills and problems.

The library decided to take action on this finding by initiating a literacy program in 1961. It arranged to join the circuit of Laubach Literacy Films and a class was organized to meet twice a week in the Gillespie Street Branch Library. The PTA's, church and civic groups, Home Demonstration and Farm Agents, and the health and welfare agencies joined in to reach and enroll adult illiterates. The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, a national sorority of professional, predominantly Negro, women agreed to co-sponsor the class. Members of the sorority attended each class on a rotating basis and gave individual instruction and help to the students. In 1961-1962 the class consisted of 13 students, 12 men and one woman. The library bought 31 copies of *Streamlined English* at a cost of $48.05. Mailing costs and insurance charges for

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5. On July 1, 1965, the Cleveland Public Library received a grant of a little over $111,000 from *Library Services and Construction Act* funds through the Ohio State Library, for special materials and counseling centers.

films which amounted to $16.50 for the set of 98 films, were also paid by the library.

The program was continued in 1962-1963 under the same co-sponsorship, while the enrollment increased to 33 students. It was decided that rotating teacher responsibility had a poor effect on the motivation of students, and also that better progress could be made by replacing the half-hour film time with teacher instruction or individual help. As a result, after the second year the films were discontinued and were replaced by an experienced adult education teacher, paid by the sorority. The sorority women, many of them teachers themselves, continued to be active through their ability to reach illiterate parents via their pupils in school, and by assisting the teacher effectively in class. The class enrollment in their 1964-1965 class reached 52. This size was manageable only because five to ten sorority women aided the teacher at each class session. The current (1965-1966) enrollment, comprised of three groups, is 48.

Two additional classes were organized through the library under a similar arrangement. The Pilot Club, another women's organization, decided to co-sponsor a literacy class in the main library. Here, also, a professional teacher is paid by the club and is assisted by club members. The library guided the initial organization, provides library space and some supplemental materials, and handles the mailing of Laubach films.

The third group was organized by an interested public school teacher who sought library help in getting started. By this time the library had become known for its work in combating illiteracy. A feature article in the Raleigh *News and Observer* reported that it was believed to be the only such library program in the state. Again, the library gave help and advice to the teacher in organizing the class and in the selection and ordering of materials, and included her in the routing of films.

A recent development which has general significance for planning community literacy programs has occurred in Fayetteville. The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, faced with mounting costs due to increased enrollment, approached the Fayetteville Technical Institute, a part of the North Carolina system of community colleges, to explore the possibility of combining resources. The Institute studied the Sorority-Library program, and, impressed with its obvious vitality and effectiveness, proposed to take it over. The sorority and the library, however, knew the value of their own involvement and insisted that the class remain in the branch library, near the homes of many students, that it continue with the same teacher with assistance from club members, and that decisions about materials, publicity, and recruitment should be made jointly by the library, the sorority, and the Institute's administration. The Institute agreed to pay the teacher's salary and book costs in exchange for its own administrative involvement and the opportunity to learn from a successful experience.

The Cumberland County Public Library literacy activity is significant for several reasons. The library is relatively small, with limited staff and budget. It has neither the staff nor the funds to do the actual teaching, or even to provide space and materials for the extent of programming that is needed. But literacy training is now available in Fayetteville because the library has provided the leadership, sometimes as an instigator, sometimes as a consultant, sometimes as a supplier of space, equipment, and films or materials. The library director has initiated and coordinated the activity singlehandedly, and it is estimated that close to 200 people learned to read because of the library's activity.

The involvement of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority is another significant factor. This organization, with a long history of library service, won an award in the past for its work in support of library bookmobiles and in 1964 the chapter at Fayetteville was cited at the sorority's national convention for its work in adult literacy. Further recognition of the work of the sponsoring group was given at the national convention in the summer of 1965, when the Fayetteville Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta received the National Projects Award for the best project conducted within its five-point program. This is the highest honor given by the sorority. With its many chapters in the south, and through its professional outlook, library interest, and natural commitment in the civil rights area, this sorority is an organization which presents to libraries a unique opportunity for cooperative and effective work in reducing adult illiteracy.

The Yakima Valley Regional Library, Yakima, Washington

"They are invisible, then they become visible, and then invisible again." This is the fascinating picture of adult illiterates given by Mrs. Helen S. Gilbert, director of the Yakima Valley Regional Library. She is referring to the way the LARK Foundation finds the almost invisible adult illiterate, brings him to class and to the library and makes him visible, and how, as his reading ability increases, he becomes like any other library user, indistinguishable from the rest.

The library has had the unique opportunity to observe this transition through its co-sponsorship of the LARK Foundation, which made its start in the library auditorium in 1957. LARK, which stands for Literacy for Adults and Related Knowledge, and now operates in seventeen states, began with the library, the Washington State Federation of Women's Clubs, Teamsters Union Local Number 524, and the inspiration and leadership of Mrs. Mary C. Wallace. The first meeting in the library auditorium was a workshop to train teachers to teach adult illiterates reading, writing, and arithmetic. From that beginning the foundation has grown to guide the work of thousands of teachers throughout the country, and in doing so to involve the library widely in literacy

education. Mrs. Wallace, who often reads and discusses Emerson with her students, stresses the importance of the library as an "added extension" to the new literate's experience and learning. In setting up chapters care is taken to insure a firm community base involving welfare agencies, unions, business, Boards of Education, and always the library. In training teachers the importance of libraries and continuing reading is emphasized. The strong library element has brought results in Yakima, where librarians say they know many "invisible people." Classes visit the library regularly and all students register for library cards. Librarians help many students to progress until they are able to use the library individually and independently. The library director continues as an active member of LARK's advisory board and supplies administrative services such as printing, mailing, and meeting space.

The lack of good supplementary materials is particularly unfortunate in the case of Yakima, because this is a situation where the library works in complete harmony and to its limit with an effective literacy program, one in which the continuing reading philosophy is almost built-in. The reaching and teaching functions are accomplished with notable success and the library is playing a vital role in the total education process. With good materials, in enough quantity, it could take the process a long step forward.

The Dallas Public Library, Dallas, Texas

The public library, in its support of literacy education in Dallas, is directing service toward a critical local need. Texas, with 13.4 per cent of its population illiterate, has almost twice the rate of the national average, and the number of illiterates in Dallas County, although considerably less than the number along the Mexican border, is estimated to total 42,600.

Operation LIFT (Literacy Instruction for Texas), a contribution-supported, citizen organization, provides most of the literacy training in the area through twenty-nine centers and a regular televised series of lessons. In June, 1963, the library, interested in supporting the work of LIFT, began by establishing a special collection of books for supplementary reading as a coordinated project of its Community Living and Family Living Departments. After discussing with a LIFT teacher the subjects in which students might be interested, the staff selected from the Children's Department titles which were thought to be useful and appropriate for the beginning adult reader. Large print, meaningful content, and adult illustrations guided them in their selection. Originally, 100 titles were chosen and shelved in a separate area, clearly identified by the LIFT poster. After one year's experience with the students, the number of titles was reduced to sixty-two. Recorded circulation figures

revealed that generally children's storybooks were not borrowed. Since then, a greater effort has been made to locate all existing adult materials on an easy-reading level. Many copies of the Laubach newspaper, *News for You,* and another newspaper, *The Dallas Lamplighter,* written by the LIFT organization, are bound by the library and added to the collection. Six branches maintain collections which duplicate that in the main library, and buying lists of the titles are sent to all branches to encourage making the materials as widely available as possible.

Class tours of the library for the purpose of introduction and registration are an integral part of the program, while the library publicizes the LIFT program through posters and displays giving information about classes offered, recruitment of teachers, and the televised series of lessons.

The library's program, like the others observed, shows that the crucial need is for more and better materials. The LIFT organization underlines this need by saying in its brochure:

> Operation LIFT is in dire need of support in the following areas:
> a. To promote and distribute free materials.
> b. to revise current materials.

It goes on to list the need for more teachers and better recruitment facilities, but the lack of materials is what is highlighted.

The Dallas Public Library demonstrates a particularly strong commitment to services to the illiterate. One staff member is a volunteer LIFT teacher, while the library director and several other members of the staff meet often with LIFT supervisors, exploring ways to improve the service. The library's excellent relations with the local press have contributed valuable publicity to the LIFT program. But the clear impression gained by the observer in Dallas is that of a library staff reaching the end of its resources in developing this kind of supportive service. Without effective materials library service is severely limited, although in Dallas library participation and support is a reality however limited, and valuable experience is being gained.

The Brooklyn Public Library
The New York Public Library
The Free Library of Philadelphia

In New York, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia the public libraries are, among other activities, pursuing an aspect of literacy training which can logically be expected in large publishing centers. Both formal and informal communication with book publishers for the purpose of exchanging information and emphasizing the great need for materials has been increased over the last two years. Katherine L. O'Brien, coordinator of Adult Services, The New York Public Library, made a strong case for

the encouragement of continuing reading through good supplementary materials at two 1964 conferences sponsored by the American Book Publishers Council and the American Textbook Publishers Institute. It may have been the first time that so many publishers were forced to consider seriously the non-text, trade book possibilities of the newly-discovered market. Mrs. Eleanor T. Smith, Adult Services Coordinator, Brooklyn Public Library, who for many years has recognized and written about the need for easy-reading adult materials, maintains continual liaison with publishers working in basic adult education and serves in both an informal and formal advisory capacity on such matters as subject interests, style and format that would be both attractive to adults and suitable for library use.

Marie Davis, coordinator of work with adults and young adults, The Free Library of Philadelphia, has also been exploring the problem and experimenting with various projects. For example, at a special meeting she brought together eighty librarians with representatives from the publishing world, the Philadelphia Writers Conference, and a writers' group of A.A.U.W. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the reading needs of the undereducated and to assess publishing plans and activities for adults of low-reading ability. The publishers represented were Doubleday, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Noble and Noble, Macrae Smith, and Westminster Press. Publishers talked about the scarcity of writers for specialized materials on a low-reading level and the lack of information about "the real needs and wishes of the market which must be made known to publishers and which will in turn determine the nature of the materials to be published." The Reverend Leon Sullivan, originator of the Opportunities Industrialization Center, an unusual job training project in Philadelphia, talked about the strong motivation among Negroes for education and about the responsibility of working with the present generation and not affording the luxury of waiting for a generation to die. It was necessary, he said, to develop their own reading materials at many Opportunities Centers then in the planning stage, and stated that the critical need was to develop reading and communication skills and techniques. He stressed particularly the self-help concept.

These librarians in New York and Philadelphia, through their contacts with publishers, are in a position to see that libraries can make an important contribution in translating "the real needs and wishes of the market" to book publishers. They recognize this aspect of the work as a professional responsibility and as a contribution which, in the long run, will give them the kind of materials needed to implement successfully the policies and programs which are already a part of their varied library operations.

The history and tradition of work with the undereducated and the adult learner, particularly in New York and Brooklyn, reach back to the

days when hoards of immigrants came into New York harbor and confidently into the branches of the public library. The library responded in kind and wrote a chapter of success in the history of public library service. The work continued and developed through successive waves of immigrants until, in the 1950's and 1960's, these libraries found the English classes from the Board of Education filled with native-born functional illiterates, many Negroes and Puerto Ricans; the Brooklyn Public Library's Reading Improvement Division serving increasing numbers of native-born functional illiterates; and the Readers' Adviser's Office in The New York Public Library guiding many functionally illiterate waitresses and elevator operators to reading classes and easy-reading materials.

This new group of potential library users was found to be different from the highly-motivated, often culturally-oriented groups of the past. The success story in the first half of the century was relatively easy to achieve compared to the effort now needed to cope with the problems so clearly seen in places like New York, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia where the Negro revolution is less a question of legal enforcement and more that of providing basic education and jobs, and where in New York, for instance, there are 500,000 people with less than five years of education.

The libraries are not waiting for this new group to come to them. They are concentrating on the problems of illiteracy through increased efforts in the areas of community contacts, materials, staff training, and programming. The Community Coordinator Program, begun in Brooklyn in 1961, is an outstanding example of library innovation which sends librarians out into the community to meet and work with organizations and individuals where cultural deprivation is prevalent, in order that the library can assist them in improving their economic, social, and cultural status.[6] Planning and participation in *Operation Alphabet*, the television program of literacy lessons, resulted in approximately 2,000 copies of the TV Home Study Books being sold through The New York Public Library branches. "Operation Second Chance," a project in literacy sponsored by the New York City Labor Department and the Board of Education, is supported by the Brooklyn Public Library and The New York Public Library through carefully-planned class visits to library branches. The project provides a valuable framework for teachers and librarians to gain experience and skills in working together on the reading needs of the new literate.

James Baldwin said that he read his way out of Harlem, and he did, in a branch of The New York Public Library. Today the libraries are

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6. See Kathleen Molz, "Joiner and Goer," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, v.38 (December, 1963), pp. 349-351, *and* Eric Moon, "A Day in Bedford Stuyvesant," *Library Journal*, v.89 (October 1, 1964), pp. 3689-3693.

moving to make their services in the metropolitan slum areas relate to more than the potentially successful writer. The same branch, for example, where Baldwin read, was (as of March, 1965) being turned into "The North Manhattan Project" by The New York Public Library, where under a grant from the *Library Services and Construction Act,* a full range of services was to be tailored to the community, from preschool hours for children to adult reading aloud groups, from library programs for the functionally illiterate to joint ventures with established agencies such as the Board of Education and new groups such as HARYOU ACT, Inc. (Harlem Youth Activities Unlimited and Associated Community Teams).

As materials become available, staff is trained, and cooperative community planning and programming increased, the libraries in the three eastern metropolitan areas, New York, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia, will become more effective in serving the needs of a vast group of people. They realize that this group is different from any in the past, but they believe it can and must profit from library service and they are working on all aspects of the service at once, to develop, extend and refine it to meet the urgent need clearly recognized in their communities.

chapter 7

Conclusions and recommendations

FOUR months of investigation for this study revealed large, new agencies, newly concerned with adult literacy. Welfare departments, television stations, private foundations, and the federal government, in addition to the established Boards of Education, university extension, churches, and the Y's, were all spiritedly engaged in literacy training for adults. The libraries observed were found stirring in response to this activity and in response to the challenge of illiteracy itself, which they regarded instinctively as a logical concern in their own efforts in the civil rights and anti-poverty movements.

There was a great lack of trained teaching personnel. Since none of the thirty-three teachers interviewed had received formal training in teaching adults to read, it is not difficult to understand why considerable confusion and anxiety about the subjects of teaching methods and materials was evident.

A major and common cause of frustration for all involved in literacy training was the serious lack of effective materials. Children's basal readers were found in use in classrooms too frequently and nowhere were truly adequate supplies of appropriate materials available.

Teachers generally were not familiar with the variety of adult materials to be obtained, especially supplementary materials, and they often used teacher-prepared substitutes. Teacher supervisors found it difficult to select and evaluate new materials. Both teachers and supervisors used the public library infrequently and said that students did not have sufficient time or ability to use library services. The possible relationship between the low number of teachers who emphasized the importance of the library to their own professional development, and the general lack of familiarity with the teaching materials should not be overlooked. A number of programs, however, included regular class

visits to libraries and about half of the teachers interviewed said that students requested additional reading to take home. This was indeed surprising in view of the fact that many teachers had said that students had neither the time nor the ability for anything more than class work. It seems possible that the teachers have underestimated the strength of motivation and capacity for learning in this kind of student.

The librarians interviewed were fully aware of the increasing opportunities for illiterate adults to learn and were seeking means for an appropriate library contribution to the literacy drive. Only a strong tradition of quality work and a desire to conserve what they saw as the unique role of the library tempered their action. This attitude had caused a slight paralysis and resulted in an overly-cautious posture. But, in spite of this, vigorous library leadership had produced an impressive range of activities; joint planning and programming between libraries and literacy agencies in all fifteen cities visited; an experimental project in basic research in literacy education in the Cleveland Public Library; the striking example of the Adult Reading Center in Kalamazoo; the successful literacy classes promoted by the Cumberland County Public Library in North Carolina; and finally the increased work with publishers by The New York Public Library, the Brooklyn Public Library and The Free Library of Philadelphia.

To these librarians, the need for appropriate materials is most critical and immediate. They feel that financial and staff support is forthcoming, and they know that publishers like Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Follett, Reader's Digest, and others are becoming active in publishing for the beginning adult reader, but in the meantime they are forced to use inferior or inappropriate materials, a situation almost abhorrent to them.

Although federal legislation, particularly the *Economic Opportunity Act* and the *Manpower Development and Training Act,* as well as the *Library Services and Construction Act,* will afford opportunities for large, new cooperative programs between libraries and community agencies, many librarians still do not see this as an imminent development. Proposals for literacy services were made by several libraries under the federal Community Action Program (Title II of the *Economic Opportunity Act*), but unfortunately, were part of a necessarily hurried and uncoordinated community effort that did not meet early success. In this new era of interagency and governmental programming, more information about successful coordination and integration of community planning is needed. This would help librarians to contribute necessary information and important values which often are overlooked by other agencies.

Despite the confident leadership shown by fifteen libraries and long-standing librarian sensitivity to problems of poverty and limited opportunity, a conclusion that describes an uncertain future is unavoidable;

librarians are anxious to develop service to illiterates and to the undereducated, disadvantaged group in general, but they are hampered by the fundamental lack of knowledge, skills and ideas in doing so. The underlying problem is that many librarians continue to develop central reference services and highly specialized subject collections because this is the kind of librarianship they know well, even while they recognize the urgency and deeper responsibility for the needs at the other end of the spectrum.

It was surprisingly difficult to "sell" research as an appropriate library activity. Clearly, however, there is a need for planning, coordination, and implementation of a library literacy effort at the national level, including studies, experimental projects, demonstrations, institutes and, at the same time, the provision of immediate service however imperfect.

The adoption of the following recommendations could lead the public library into a contributing partnership in the drive against illiteracy:

1. Bibliographies of easy-reading materials should be made available to all libraries as soon as possible. These bibliographies should include a selection of appropriate adult materials, (e.g., the new basic education titles from Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Follett, Reader's Digest, and others), government pamphlets, some selected Laubach publications, (e.g., the newspaper, *News for You),* and a few, carefully-selected children's titles of adult interest and format which must be used temporarily until an adequate supply of new adult materials is available.[1]
2. The ALA Adult Services Division's Committee on Reading Improvement for Adults should be expanded immediately and be charged not only with the responsibility of general leadership in the development of library literacy services, but also with the immediate responsibility for testing and evaluating materials, continuing the production of bibliographies, and developing a training guide for librarians.
3. A planning meeting should be held, under the joint direction of the Committee on Reading Improvement (ASD) and the Committee on Serving the Functionally Illiterate (Public Library Association, ALA), to bring together national, state and local library leaders for the purpose of planning organizational patterns through which an effective development of library literacy services could be achieved. Government, trustee, and academic groups should be represented.
4. A consultant position should be established at ALA headquarters to help libraries in developing literacy services, to collect data

1. See "Books for Adults Beginning to Read," *Wilson Library Bulletin,* v.40 (September, 1965), pp. 66–70.

on programs and materials, including audio-visual and programmed instruction, and to develop training aids for librarians on the basis of the information and experience gained.

In addition to the findings, conclusions, and recommendations resulting from any study there is also the human side which often is the more revealing part. In attempting to understand the forces which fundamentally allow change and growth, it is the human factor, the prevailing human attitudes and beliefs, which need to be understood and gauged.

For instance, over and above and around this study a dialogue went on and it continues now. "Is it the library's job to teach?" "How can these people possibly be reached?" "When they become readers, then we will serve them." The dialogue could easily be the reality and the fifteen libraries, plus the national committees and the national literature could be more courage than substance. Yet, through a study of this sort, the basically negative quality of the dialogue is revealed. It turns out to be part of Galbraith's "conventional wisdom" and almost completely irrelevant to the real issues involved.

"Is it the library's job to teach?" Teaching needs are being supplied by many agencies, but no other agency is taking aggressive and responsible charge of meeting the very desperate and urgent book needs and the transition into continuing reading.

"How can these people possibly be reached?" The important point is that great numbers are already being reached. They are in the government retraining projects, welfare education programs and evening schools, and therefore one step closer to the public library. The real question is whether or not we will move fast enough to meet them half-way.

"When they become readers, then we will serve them." If we wait that long, and it will seem like tomorrow, we will not have contributed to the very real national effort which is going on right now. Other educational agencies will know it, but worse than that, the former illiterate will know it. He will know it and respond accordingly, the way the immigrant knew a different experience with the public library and responded accordingly.

appendix I

STATEMENT OF STUDY

American Library Association
Executive Offices: 50 East Huron Street, Chicago 60611

Adult Services Division
Study of Services to Adult Illiterates

Aims of study:
The Study of Services to Adult Illiterates is designed to obtain facts on programs of service currently being provided by libraries and other adult education agencies. The results of the study should be useful in improving library services to functionally illiterate adults.

Significance of study:
Today 700 million adults in the world cannot read and write. Until recently the people of the United States considered illiteracy the problem of other countries but not their own. This is not the case. United States census figures for 1960 show that 8 million people twenty-five years of age or older had completed four or less years of school and 30.5 million had completed only five to eight years of school. If present trends continue the projected figures for 1980 are 5.2 million in the first group and 21.5 million in the second. These figures represent roughly the present and future illiterate and functionally illiterate groups in the United States.

Libraries have a responsibility for reaching and serving these people. To do so librarians must enlarge their knowledge of the undereducated and revise their concepts of service. Information, specialized training, and suitable materials are needed to meet this challenge.

Methods of procedure:

1. Make a limited field study of selected existing programs of service to illiterate adults to determine:
   - *a*) adult education agencies offering instruction
   - *b*) personnel and methods
   - *c*) instructional and supplemental materials
   - *d*) cooperation between instructional agencies and libraries
   - *e*) library services and supplemental reading materials available and/or needed.
2. On the basis of the findings formulate proposals and recommendations for further study and action.

Note: Drawn from the original proposal, this "Statement of Study" was used by the interviewer to provide an explanation and background for her interviews.

appendix II

MATERIALS MOST FREQUENTLY FOUND IN USE IN CLASSROOMS

Cass, A. W. *Everyday English and Basic Word List for Adults.* Noble and Noble, 1960.

Chandler, Edna Walker. *Cowboy Sam.* Benefic Press, 1958.

Gay, Romney. *A Home for Sandy.* D. C. Heath, 1955.

Gray, William Scott. *The New Friends and Neighbors.* Scott, Foresman, 1956.

Guyton, Mary Louise. *From Words to Stories.* Noble and Noble, 1951.

Home and Family Life Series. Arthur C. Croft Publications, 1960.

- Reader One *A Day with the Brown Family.*
- Reader Two *Making a Good Living.*
- Reader Three *The Browns at School.*
- Reader Four *The Browns and Their Neighbors.*

Laubach, Frank C. *Streamlined English.* Macmillan, 1951.

McCall, William A. and Crabbs, Lelah M. *Standard Lessons in Reading.* 3rd ed. Teachers College, Columbia University, 1961.

National Association of Public School Adult Educators. *Operation Alphabet;* TV Home Study Book. Washington, D.C., The Association, 1962.

News for You, Newspaper in Easy English for Adults. Published by Robert S. Laubach, Syracuse, N.Y.

Robertson, M. S. *Adult Reader.* Steck Co., 1964.

CHECKLIST FOR INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

1. What materials do you use? Give examples.
   Instructional
   Supplemental
   Audio-visual
   Homemade (teacher-prepared)
2. How are materials supplied?
   Sold_____ Loaned_____ Given away_____
3. Are you satisfied with the materials you use?
   Completely_____ Moderately_____ Not at all_____
4. Are you familiar with most available materials in this field?
   Yes_____ No_____
5. Do you use the public library in connection with this course?
   Frequently_____ Occasionally_____ Not at all_____
6. Do your students use the public library, either as a class or individually? or both?
   Class_____ Individually_____ Both_____
7. In what way can the public library aid literacy education?
   Information and materials for teachers_____
   Information and materials for students_____
   Class visits_____
   Space for classes_____
8. Do your students request additional material to take home?
   Yes_____ No_____
9. Do any of your students become regular library users?
   Yes_____ No_____
10. Have you had any special (formal) training in teaching adults; if so, where?
11. What reasons do your students give for coming to class?

CHECKLIST FOR INTERVIEWS WITH LIBRARIANS

1. Is your community leadership concerned about illiteracy?
   Strongly_____moderately_____mildly_____
2. Is your library administration, as a whole, concerned about illiteracy?
   Strongly_____moderately_____mildly_____
3. What is the nature of your library's role in literacy activities?
   a) Community leadership_____(i.e., initiates action)
   b) Joint community programming_____(e.g., supply or distribution of materials for programs of other agencies, or provision of publicity; supplying library space for classes or regular class visits)
   c) Joint community planning_____(e.g., participation in community councils actively engaged in planning or conducting literacy activities)
   d) Independent library programs or activities_____
4. What are your independent library activities?
   a) Film, music lecture programs planned specifically with the illiterate in mind_____
   b) Reading improvement classes or clinics_____(i.e., reading instruction administered by the library)
   c) Specialized advisory services_____(e.g., a readers' adviser's office or a reading consultant position)
   d) Reading aloud groups_____(i.e., a program, formal or informal, of groups of adults, other than classes, reading aloud with library or library-sponsored personnel, to improve reading ability)
   e) Special collections for the student_____; for the teacher_____
   f) Research_____(e.g., community study, library experiment, librarian committee on materials or methods)
   g) National association work_____(e.g., staff involvement in literacy work in ALA, NEA, AEA, publishers' councils, etc.)

5. Which library role (or roles) do you think is particularly:
   a) Appropriate_____
   b) Inappropriate_____
6. Which library activities do you think are particularly:
   a) Appropriate_____
   b) Inappropriate_____

appendix v

READING WITH ADULTS OF LIMITED EDUCATION

A Report of a Reading Group at the Carnegie West Branch,
Cleveland Public Library, March–April, 1965

by
Katherine Prescott
Branch Librarian

In the spring of 1965 the PACE Association of Cleveland organized a "Right to Read" program that involved 400 functionally illiterate adults and more than 100 citizen volunteers. Eighteen instructors were trained to teach reading by the *Words in Color* method of Caleb Gattegno,[1] with the expectation that after the course the students would be able to read at fourth grade level. Several courses were given in the vicinity of the Carnegie West Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, where I have been in charge.

As a follow-up to one course, I, as branch librarian, met with a group of men who had finished the PACE "Right to Read" course to read aloud for six weeks, beginning March 23, 1965. The group met at the branch library on Tuesday evenings for about an hour in one of the upstairs classrooms. The purpose of this experimental project was to help the members continue reading after the completion of the PACE class, to establish a relationship between them and the public library, and for the branch librarian to learn about the needs and capacities of so-called functional illiterates. From a class of twenty or so, eight showed interest, and four men stayed in the course.

The shift from the PACE class to the library was brought about when the teacher, Mrs. S., invited the members of the class, at the suggestion

1. See *Wilson Library Bulletin*, v.40 (September, 1965), p. 62.

of the branch librarian, to go with her to the library on the Tuesday evening following the close of the PACE course.

During the first session we read a little book about seeds, *Travelers All.* For the other meetings we read *Early Days in Cleveland.* Both books were at the top limit of the men's ability, and the second was very good because when new words were introduced they were repeated several times in the next few pages. Although the men were enthusiastic about the PACE classes and had learned the rudiments of reading, at the beginning no one could read a complete sentence without missing words. These books are at about fourth grade level. At the end three men could read very easy sentences at about half the speed of normal speech.Typically one or two words in every sentence would have to be sounded out. The men listening would make the words with their lips to the leader while the reader was struggling, for almost always one of the men present could read the word. The tension of reading meant that the reader often got it last. The reading was a cooperative group effort; we gave hints, sounded words-within-words, and rhymed vowel sounds. When we were really stumped, the leader would write the word on the blackboard, and we'd work it out together. We were able to read four to six pages an hour, and the men were as tired after this time as a good English reader would be in the first year of a foreign language.

The men all said they could read better in the group than at home. Their wives did not have the patience to let them take the time to work through sounding out the words. Six of the men took out library cards, and four of them used them during the experiment. Most of them spoke of reading with their children. They all seemed to be men of ability and determination, and were all employed. Two lived in the neighborhood of the Carnegie West Branch and four were from the suburbs. All were white, married, and most of them in their early thirties, highly motivated, and intelligent. It seemed evident that all had wives who read much better than they did and, except for one, small children also learning to read. This suggests that there may be many more functional illiterates in the inner city than the U.S. Census reveals, men who may have had more education than these but who are less intelligent, less stable, and who through disuse have lost much of the reading ability they once had.

Mr. J. is the most realistic and determined of the group. He said that he lived in a town near Cleveland as a boy, but didn't pay attention in school. He did well in arithmetic until he ran into reading difficulty. He attended all six sessions and made the greatest improvement. He set out to start with the simplest books and work up. By himself he read *Wings, Wheels and Motors, The Freight Yard,* and *Fathers at Work.* He made a big jump forward one rainy evening when he was the only member to appear for the first half hour, and then was joined by Mr. N. Both were able to read more than usual that evening, and their progress was marked.

Mr. V. is in his forties, lives in the Carnegie West neighborhood and is at fourth to fifth grade ability. He might have come more often but for the fact that his wife had to go to the hospital for surgery twice during the period. He attended two sessions and the first time took out *Story Book of Ships, First Book of Canada,* and *The Presidency,* by Johnson. The second time he took a book on third grade spelling.

Mr. Kenneth E. lives in the Carnegie West neighborhood, said he went through the eighth grade in Tennessee, but his problem is comprehension. He read quickly and would look ahead to see what sentence he would probably get. He came the first time but, when called on the phone later, said that his church choir rehearsal was on Tuesdays, and that he had joined the "Right to Read" classes to learn to read the words with the music. He explained that his choir director was helping him with his reading and said how grateful he was that someone was interested in him.

Mr. D. came three times. He did not take out books and did not seem to improve very much in the group, but at the last session he remarked that about two weeks before he had found he could read the newspaper. He left work one night to come when his boss wanted him to work overtime and reported that he had said to him, "Do you want me to be a dummy all my life?" He did not like the book on Cleveland and was not interested in history. He said, with eyes dancing, that he'd been reading a "real sexy book, with long words like bed*roooom!*"

Mr. B. did not come the first time and when called he said he'd driven around the library that night but didn't come in. He added that he'd only had three grades of school while the others had much more. When told that Mrs. S. had thought he could do all right, he said that if *she* thought he could, he would come. When he registered for a card he could barely write his name. And also, as he put it, "with seven kids there's not much time to read." He was definitely behind the others, and came only three times, since one week his uncle was very ill. He took out *Wings, Wheels, and Motors, A True Book of Pets,* and after the last meeting came in on Thursday evening with his wife for the book on Cleveland we'd been reading together. He was from West Virginia and had lived in a log cabin like the one described in the book. At the last meeting Mr. N. spotted this man's problem—"He spells the letters, 'eff,' rather than sounding them, 'fff.' " Mr. B. seemed to get the idea and improvement came right away.

Mr. N. is perhaps the most able of the group. He did not come the first time so I phoned him and he came the second. He said "I'm glad I came tonight" and spoke several times about how much better he could read in the group than at home. He took out a book on the boyhood of Mark Twain but didn't get too far with it. He said it wasn't hard but too long. When I talked to his wife she said she had never realized before what a problem his reading was to him.

The men were all grateful for the concern of the library and the four who really worked at it felt they had learned a good deal. Mrs. S. visited the fifth session and thought so, too. She helped them to review a bit and it was quite interesting to see how effectively her manner of relaxed but unwavering attention kept them moving. They were delighted when she had them sound out the word "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious." They were at first flabbergasted, then full of glee to have something to stun their families with. The men were glad to see her and have a high regard for her. The personal interest of teacher and librarian is a vital factor in the progress of these men. They need help, encouragement, and the feeling that someone is pulling for them. It is also important to recognize the fact that, until such time as the habit of reading is established, they will not read without the commitment to a definite program. It was essential, I believe, to follow up each man who missed a meeting as long as he seemed really to be wanting to come.

The lives of adults fall into rather set habit patterns, and if reading is not a part of this pattern, it will undoubtedly take a long time for this new habit to become established. So many things militate against it—illness, church and union meetings, working hours, family obligations, fatigue, difficulty in concentrating, discouragement, and the mere fact that reading is not an accustomed activity.

If the reading ability of these men is to be maintained and increased, they need to get the "library habit"; otherwise, with all the distractions of a busy life, they are likely to drop back again. To bring this possibility within range, there needs to be some sort of working relationship between literacy teachers and the library staff.

So far as the library's long term responsibility is concerned, this experience underlines the fact that there is a vast need for simple books of interest to adults of limited education. Contrary to expectation, the men in the reading group preferred books in the large type format of children's books, and definitely with profuse illustration. It must also be recognized that hard as the skill of basic reading is to learn, it is just as hard to climb from one plateau of reading skill to the next. Furthermore, the need for reaching this next level is less obvious and is linked with broader educational achievement.

As a librarian, I found it illuminating to see the reading difficulties of these men—their slowness, their trouble with sounds, especially vowels, and set against these their courage and innate ability—and to realize what a terrible tenacity is required for an adult to catch up on his fundamental education. The members of the reading group were all employed labor union members. This would indicate that informal reading groups offer a sound and much needed activity for library-union cooperation.

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appendix VI

LIBRARIES AND LITERACY
A NEW COMMITMENT

Note: Miss MacDonald first presented the findings reported in this study under the title "Libraries and Illiteracy–a new Commitment?" at a meeting sponsored by the Adult Services Division's Committee on Reading Improvement for Adults, on July 5, 1965 during the ALA Annual Conference in Detroit, Michigan. Among those responding to her report was Mrs. Lillian M. Bradshaw, director, Dallas Public Library,[1] who presented the following comments.

As the library respondent to Miss MacDonald's report, I feel a little like a ready-mix frosting on top of a good home-made cake, because the ingredients of this report have been put together with care, with understanding and with concern.

As for the question "is this a *new* commitment for librarians," I can only say I do *not* feel that it is an entirely *new* commitment but rather it is the opportunity for a *re*-newed commitment by all of us who profess to be *service* librarians. For the report points out a good many things we are capable of doing, but have yet to do, as well as some things we can improve upon.

Until the MacDonald survey, those of us who looked into the matter were able to find little more than a general agreement that illiteracy was a problem in the United States; and that there was a scarcity of reading materials for the beginning adult reader. We now have an evaluation of the current stage of literacy education based on a librarian's observation of fifteen cities engaged, more or less, in literacy work and we have recommendations which can set into motion a coordinated and effective program against illiteracy. For librarians, this means that we have the

1. See pp. 28-29 for the report on the Dallas Public Library.

opportunity to provide improved library service to an enlarged public of millions of Americans. If there's one observation that's very apparent here, it's that we are going to need all the help we can get from publishers and educators and that we, as librarians, must work to produce an effective and realistic program.

Before commenting briefly on the significance for librarianship, may I say how fortunate I think we were to have this survey made by Miss MacDonald. She came into our town and talked to everyone we put before her with inquisitive intelligence and mature sensitivity. We even exposed her to some Texas politicians and they came away loving her. She saw our few strengths and our many weaknesses but her genuine interest in objectives was always paramount—and from this study, she has made recommendations which, I believe, hold many thoughts (some good and some disquieting) for librarians. She found—and this is our cue—"local librarians aware of what's going on and aware of needs but lacking fundamentally the knowledge and ideas to properly develop service to illiterates."

My first question is to what degree are we *lacking* in this knowledge and to what degree have we put some knowledge on the back shelf in favor of more pleasant projects?

Second guessing in politics is a popular exercise down my way and the 1966 campaigns are arousing much interest. Last week, one hopeful candidate said, "You can't look in the bucket of possibilities until the man sitting on the lid gets off." Well, I'm afraid that, in some cases, it is the adult services librarians and the administrators who have been "sitting on the lid" and that we need to get up and move—now.

First, have we really looked at these illiterates as *people* to *serve? Not* as a statistic, not as a problem for another agency, but as individuals who need *our* talents and *our* services?

You know, maybe the word *service* is old-fashioned so call it "human relations" or "reader guidance," if you like. But from Bryson and Flexner in the thirties to Lyman and Phinney in the sixties, the emphasis in adult education has always been *people-centered.*

Have we taken the time to understand these customers as people? How many of our staff members get really concerned about the nonreader or the reader as a person? I'm not so sure, or Miss MacDonald might, perhaps, have found *better* library attempts to understand the illiterates. I think we have some of the knowledge. I'm not so sure we are putting it to work.

I'm not blaming us entirely because many librarians have had to fight their own war on poverty—long before LBJ formulated one. We've needed money, books, buildings, and equipment . . . and many have spent the last few years concentrating on buildings rather than on people. But I hope we haven't traded our service birthright for an air-conditioned

image. Perhaps it's time to leave our blueprints and come out of our new, carpeted buildings and take a real look at the people waiting for us.

The majority of these illiterates will live in the slums of our metropolitan areas; many are migrant workers; many are runny-nosed and dirty-faced children, tired and grubby women, thin-faced and hopeless men. Librarians cannot afford cataracts of unconcern if we are to respond to this report on illiteracy. We must team up with the publisher and with the educator—we've got a great role to play—and we're the custodians of the stuff that's unlocking these doors to literacy.

I would say that librarians have been given six definite charges if we are to do our part in implementing the MacDonald report:

1. Get out and renew acquaintances with this audience—talk to them in their *own* environment and win their respect for what we offer. If you will pardon one personal reference I think it will demonstrate how far off we can be. Not so long ago some of us were meeting with some of those who lived in a deep poverty area of Dallas . . . our concern was how to reach more of the illiterates . . . one of us gave a plea to utilize the community newspapers and to place ads in the stores. It was a fine academic speech, but when he finished, a long, tall man rose in the audience and said, "Why, man? We can't read." And so we must, through study and exposure, learn our audience.
2. Make a welcome place for these people in our libraries—invite them and see that they are made comfortable and, most important, that their limitations are understood by the staff before they come.
3. Search out materials in your collections and share this knowledge with each of us—so that the bibliographies of easy-reading materials, recommended by the MacDonald report, will become a reality.
4. Be constantly aware of what is contained in the new legislative programs. So much is happening that holds hope for the illiterates and promise for the librarian's role. So much is happening so fast one sometimes feels that you "can't tell the players without a program"—well, the program is ready for us, too—guides prepared by the Library Services Branch and the ALA Washington Office. Let's not just prepare special collections for the other fellow—let's use them ourselves.
5. See that the library is always included in community planning when we can be useful. Get yourself invited, "politic in" if necessary, but get there. Our professional services are ineffective unless the educator, the social worker, the city councilman know what we can do for them. We can't depend on the Mayor or the Community Council "asking" us—they probably won't unless we take the initiative and demonstrate that the library has something for both the illiterate and the planner.

6. Stand ready to participate in all national plans to improve the library's literacy effort.

These six charges expressed in workman's words, not academic language, simply translate "adult services" into "community awareness"—regardless of whether it is on a campus, in a business, a small town or a bulging city. I have always liked the term Master of Library *Service* better than Master of Library *Science,* and for this illiteracy task ahead of us it seems singularly appropriate—since, as librarians, our responsibility to *know* the individual reader *should mean* individual service.

Moss Hart, in his poignantly beautiful autobiography, *Act I,* described how, on hot summer evenings, he sat on the stoop of his poor tenement flat and told stories to the "toughies" in the block. And as he unraveled for them the mysteries of books, he said they listened with the "excitement of discovery." Ladies and gentlemen, how long has it been since each of you, as people of the book, shared the "excitement of discovery" with a non-reader? Miss MacDonald's findings and recommendations have given each librarian the opportunity through which he *can* share this experience with a waiting audience.

Recently I heard a man say that last year 4.5 million Americans bought ¼" drills . . . and then he went on to say that not one customer who bought a ¼" drill really wanted a ¼" drill—what he really wanted was a ¼" hole.

I believe the MacDonald report can be the librarian's ¼" drill and, with it, we can give to our illiterates—first, a ¼" hole of hope in the wall of illiteracy, then a ½" hole and then an ever-increasing one until each human being becomes exposed to this "excitement of discovery" and finds ceilings unlimited in educational opportunity.