

# PRINTED PAGE AND THE PUBLIC PLATFORM

A STUDY OF THE RELATION OF READING  
TO FORUMS AND DISCUSSION

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## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER I

	Page
FOREWORD	v
READING AND DISCUSSION SUPPLEMENT EACH OTHER	1
Relatively Small Amount of Reading Done	3
Are Forum Patrons Poor Readers?	4

### CHAPTER II

PUBLICITY AND EDUCATION	7
Emphasis on Reading by Forum Leaders	8
Influence of the Librarian at the Forum Meeting	10
Newspaper Publicity	13
Reading Lists	15
Annotations and Difficulty Ratings on Reading Lists	16
Lists for Preparatory or Follow-up Reading	20
Format and Other Details for Reading Lists	21
Who Prepares the Reading List?	22
Point of View of Reading List Recommendations	22

### CHAPTER III

ACCESSIBILITY	24
Reading Material Available at the Forum	24
Borrowing Routines and Accessibility	27
Pamphlet Distribution	28
Accessibility of Magazine Articles	31
Display of Forum Books at the Library	32
Duplicate Copies and Accessibility	32
Cost of Reading Material and the Forum Budget	33

### CHAPTER IV

SUITABILITY OF THE READING MATERIAL	36
Dearth of Readable Books	36
What is Readable Writing?	38
Readability in Social Science Fields	39
What is Being Done About It?	42
Special Values of Pamphlets	43
Suitability of Magazine Articles	44

	Page
Newspaper Article on Public Questions . . . . .	47
Leaders' Outlines as Follow-up Reading Material . . . . .	49

## CHAPTER V

SOME EXAMPLES OF FORUM-LIBRARY COOPERATION . . . . .	50
Large City Libraries . . . . .	50
(a) Des Moines, Iowa . . . . .	50
(b) Springfield, Mass. . . . .	53
(c) Wichita, Kans. . . . .	55
Smaller City, Town, and Village Libraries . . . . .	66
(a) Macon, Ga. . . . .	67
(b) Norris, Tenn. . . . .	68
(c) Hattiesburg, Miss. . . . .	69
(d) Dublin, Ga. . . . .	70
(e) Waupun, Wis. . . . .	70
(f) New London, N. H. . . . .	73
(g) Riverside, Ill. . . . .	75
Other Library-Forum Relationships . . . . .	77
(a) Libraries as Hosts for Small Discussion Groups . . . . .	77
(b) Reading Groups and Book Clubs . . . . .	78
(c) The Library as a Recruiting Agency for Groups and Leaders . . . . .	79
(d) Libraries and Junior Forums . . . . .	80
(e) The Branch Library and the Neighborhood Forum . . . . .	80
Rural discussion groups and reading . . . . .	84

## CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY . . . . .	90
SELECTED REFERENCES . . . . .	95

## FOREWORD

ADULTS CANNOT be induced to go *back* to school but they can be assisted in continuing their education. The school, the university, forums, discussion groups, libraries, newspapers, magazines, the radio, and the motion pictures—all have roles to play in making education a continuing process for adults. The public forum demonstrations, sponsored by the Office of Education, have emphasized the importance of the cooperation of many agencies in achieving community-wide adult civic education.

This bulletin represents a cooperative effort. It recognizes the important contribution which is being made by the libraries to forums and points ways of improving the collaboration. The Executive Board of the American Library Association projected a series of "Studies of Adult Education and Library Relationships" in January 1934 to be made by their Adult Education Board. The first of these pamphlets was *The Library in the T. V. A. Adult Education Program*.<sup>1</sup> Another was to deal with the relations of forums and libraries.

The Office of Education recognized the need for a publication of this kind and set about to prepare one in the spring of 1936. It was natural, therefore, that these two agencies, working together in the field, should join hands in preparing a pamphlet on what they were doing.

This publication is based upon the following:

- (1) Conferences and discussions between Mr. Chancellor and Mr. Williams.
- (2) Material gathered from published and unpublished reports in the field.
- (3) A questionnaire inquiry prepared by Mr. Chancellor and Mr. Williams and sent to—
  - (a) More than 100 libraries known to have been interested in serving forums.
  - (b) Four hundred and thirty forum administrators whose programs had been studied by the staff of the public forum project.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Published by the American Library Association, Chicago, Ill., June 1937.

<sup>2</sup> The results of this study will appear in a bulletin publication entitled "Choosing Our Way" to be published by the Office of Education.

- (4) Field trips made to Des Moines, Iowa; Springfield, Mass.; and other places by Mr. Chancellor and visits to various forum demonstration centers by Mr. Williams.
- (5) Reports from forum librarians in the 19 demonstration centers

The study is concerned with forums and discussion groups of all sizes and of various sponsorships, but is limited to those which deal with public affairs. There has been little attempt to explore the activities of groups discussing philosophy, literature, the arts, etc.

We hope that this publication may stimulate and assist librarians and leaders of discussion to find more and better ways of making the printed page serve the needs of the forums.

JOHN W. STUDEBAKER,  
*Commissioner of Education.*

CARL H. MILAM,  
*Secretary, American Library Association.*

# CHAPTER I

## READING AND DISCUSSION SUPPLEMENT EACH OTHER

A FORMER DES MOINES forum leader, Lyman Bryson, said to a group of librarians a few years ago:

It doesn't matter how skillful a forum leader may be in reducing a difficult subject to a fairly simple and lucid statement. How much is going to stick in the minds of the people who listen? Take your own experience. I am willing to take mine. I have judged these Monday evening lecturers and I sit right behind them on the platform. It is my business to heckle them when they get through, and I can remember, of what Mr. Paul Douglas said 2 weeks ago, only a few words, a few general points \* \* \* But these people [the forum-goers] listen to lectures with a different purpose from yours or mine. They are after information and they haven't anything like the skill or capacity to remember information that you or I might have. Their minds are not trained to it. What do they get out of a lecture? Something pretty vague and shadowy and something that isn't going to last very long, yet they want more. That comes to the conclusion that the forum, or public lecture, useful as it may be, isn't enough. You have to supplement it with something else. The only thing with which you can supplement it is reading, and you have to have the kind of reading that will do for these people what needs to be done if the forum is to be of value \* \* \*

This study is based on this fairly obvious assumption that it is desirable to combine reading, or individual study, with discussion if that discussion is to have full value as education. The assumption that this combination—study and discussion—is good educational procedure has been implied in most education for centuries. In formal learning the student reads his text and discusses it later with his teachers and fellow students, or he attends the lecture and follows it with so-called "collateral" reading.

From our own experience we know that the concepts that really become a part of us are those that come as a result of repeated rehandling of some particular subject matter, as a result of reviewing it in many varied aspects and applications. In this follow-up,

reading has real value as a supplement to the lecture or discussion. One really captures an idea with the eye after being made conscious of it through the ear.

Conversely, there are probably similar and equal advantages in following study from the printed page by discussion with one's fellows. It affords the same opportunity to review the subject matter and in addition we have new lights thrown on our facts and concepts. Having to use them under challenge, we either completely discard them or make them genuinely and permanently our own. Consequently, in the following considerations on providing reading to supplement discussion, we must take into account both *preparatory* and *follow-up* reading.

There is another important consideration bearing on the need for supplementary reading. The lecture and discussion methods of considering ideas and facts are inadequate. Our own frequent experience of faulty reporting of what we or someone else said is an evidence of this. The discrepancies and lack of agreement in students' lecture notes, familiar to instructors, is another evidence. Our emotional set toward the speaker greatly influences what we learn from him. It acts as a sieve to strain out either the things we don't want to hear or the things we do want to hear. One arresting statement of a speaker may plunge us into such contemplation that we become oblivious to his next statement which distinctly qualifies the first one. Add to these drawbacks our great powers of forgetfulness and the limitations to the educational effectiveness of the lecture or discussion method alone become apparent.

These points of view are stressed not as a criticism of the forum method but to emphasize that its full educational value is not realized unless it is supplemented by something like individual study and reading which help our new insights to take real root in our minds. The distinctive values which the forum has to contribute to education are exercise in tolerance, impartial examination and suspended judgment, and powerful stimulation of interest and thought. These are exactly the qualities needed to vitalize individual study through reading. Discussion and reading are natural complements to one another.

These considerations are fairly obvious and yet the question-

naire survey for this study revealed that relatively little had been done to facilitate these supplementary reading and study opportunities except in the demonstrations at Des Moines, Springfield, the 19 Federal forum demonstration centers, and a few other places. Repeatedly the comment was made that the suggestions implied in the questions were especially welcome but were *new* and that something would be done to follow them out next session. The suggestion that there should be ample provision for supplementary reading was readily accepted, but it was obvious that its importance had so far occurred to but few forum managements. The explanation probably lies in the newness of the idea of the public forum as an educational instrument. There has not yet been time to perfect it in all the details. Another explanation, doubtless, is that the proponents of reading, the librarians, are perhaps a little tardy in suggesting reading as a necessary supplement to such informal educational projects as forums.

#### RELATIVELY SMALL AMOUNT OF READING DONE

The survey also revealed another evidence of the youth of the forum as an educational instrument. The forum-goers are even less aware than the administrators that reading and study can be a vital adjunct of discussion. Where reading facilities were offered they made relatively little use of them. In Des Moines in May 1933 a questionnaire survey indicated that about 19 percent of those who had attended some forum meetings had read parts or all of one or more books recommended on the mimeographed reading lists distributed at forum meetings. This is little when it is considered that reading one chapter in one book would serve to count a person in this 19 percent. Even 100 percent of the participants reported as readers would not necessarily indicate full utilization of reading opportunity.

In Wichita, one of the Federal forum demonstration centers, outstanding book service was given by the public library, sending trained librarians, with an ample lending collection of books, to each meeting. In the early months the number of books bor-



rowed at each meeting ranged from 13 per night in some sections of the city to 3 in others, an average for the whole city of 6 per meeting where the average nightly attendance was about 60. In two other Federal forum demonstration centers where some definite effort was made to circulate library books to forum patrons there were results comparable to those at Wichita.

There were more encouraging responses at Springfield, Mass., and Pittsburgh, Pa., and in several Federal forum demonstration centers the circulation of pamphlets was roughly two to nine times greater than the book circulation records.

In general, these examples are typical and show no very great amount of reading done in the particular books and pamphlets on which some circulation statistics are available. However, we cannot generalize too broadly from these few figures. They do not mean that forum-goers, as a class, are incapable of becoming interested in reading. They do not even mean that they do not read a good deal already as a result of the stimulation of forum discussions. These aroused interests may be the cause of a considerably increased amount of reading on public questions in magazines and newspapers or in books and pamphlets procured elsewhere about which we know nothing. These interests may also remain temporarily dormant for a period but lead to reading later on when a new suggestion or opportunity is presented. About all these results show is that so far we have not been overly successful in getting forum-goers to read the particular materials we have offered under the particular conditions we have set up.

#### ARE FORUM PATRONS POOR READERS?

Experiences such as these have led to the assumption on the part of some that a large proportion of the people who attend such meetings are what has been called "ear-minded" as opposed to "print-minded." This may be true to an unknown degree, but perhaps a more accurate statement would be that a large proportion of adults are inefficient or inexperienced readers. They turn to auditory sources of information, such as forums and radio, only because poor opportunities for learning to read erected barriers to the world of print for them. While recent

studies<sup>1</sup> have revealed a surprising amount of faulty reading habits, even among college students, so faulty and inefficient that their success as students and professional workers is seriously limited, the fact remains that a great deal of this is due to faulty training in learning to read and relatively little to what might be termed an irremediable mental set incapacitating them for reading.

Whatever the causes, it is apparent that comparatively little reading is now done in connection with forums, that many forum-goers can never read the kind of materials now available in social sciences with satisfaction, and that another large group is probably capable of reading the available materials but lacks incentive, interest, time, or something else needed to do so. There is reason to believe, however, that both groups contain many potential readers. The obstacles in the way of the disinterested group seem fairly easy to remove; many in the poor-reader group can probably read with satisfaction as soon as we learn to produce reading materials that are at once brief, interesting, nonacademic, and simple in construction or vocabulary.

But in both cases it will require patience and persistence. It will require experimentation and funds. Few libraries or forum administrations are now equipped to render an adequate reading materials service. It must have a place in the forum's budget of both money and personnel. A beginning recognition of such needs is seen in the provisions for reading material in some of the Federal forum demonstration centers.

On the assumption with which we started—that reading in connection with public affairs forums is desirable—what can be done to facilitate it? As a result of our survey of the present situation, it seems that our effort must be directed toward three main tasks:

1. *Education and publicity on coupling reading and discussion.*—It has never occurred to many forum-goers, and perhaps not to some leaders, that the former might read in connection with the things being discussed at the meetings. It must first be brought home to them that supplementary reading not only

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<sup>1</sup> Gray, Wm. S. Reading difficulties in college. *Journal of Higher Education*, 7:356-362, October 1936.

is possible but that it improves both the discussion and what is carried away from it and that it can be made interesting. The primary need is to get leaders to look on themselves not as authoritarian lecturers, but as guides of discussion and "skilled exciters of interest and curiosity" for the knowledge that is to be found in printed matter.

2. *Making reading materials easily accessible.*—Few merchants who want wider distribution of their wares make them so hard to get as we usually make our reading materials. Since the idea of coupling reading and discussion is in its infancy, we cannot expect it to grow if people experience great inconvenience in obtaining reading materials.
3. *Providing a suitable type of reading material.*—This is perhaps the most important task. Few forum-goers have the interest necessary to enable them to read most of the material now available in the social science field, because of its academic or technical character. Few have the time or the patience to read a long book and the pamphlet is still imperfect, hard to procure, and insufficient in supply.

Let us now review the experiences of both forum and library programs with respect to each of the three needs mentioned above to see what suggestions may be found toward meeting them.

## CHAPTER II

### PUBLICITY AND EDUCATION

THE FIRST STEP necessary to induce more reading of an educational nature in connection with public discussion is to help people to become aware of the reading opportunity and convinced of its value and importance. Those accustomed to going to books for information and education assume that practically every intelligent person knows of this opportunity and knows how to use it, and that mental laziness is the principal reason most people do not use it. They little realize that vast numbers of able and intelligent people are as unfamiliar with the world of books as they are with the Province of Tibet. Librarians who work with the public know the common expression of utter surprise when one of this vast nonreader group discovers that the information needed in his hobby or his personal problem or momentary interest is completely set down in books. These people never suspect books of having anything of interest for *them*. Except for stories, they have long ago dismissed all books as dull and academic. In many cases this is a hang-over association from school days when their only book acquaintances were unloved textbooks.

But there is more than ignorance and apathy keeping this large nonreader group away from books. They regard print with the same fear and distrust with which they regard some useful but complicated machine which they do not know how to operate. They feel that it doubtless would help them in making decisions and solving many puzzles—personal and social—but that it is only for those skilled in its use. Mr. Bryson's observations on this prevalent attitude in a large group of nonreading lecture-goers are so much in point that he must be quoted again:

They haven't any reading habits and, not having reading habits, they prefer to listen to a person talk about the subject \* \* \* I think that when they hear a person talk they feel a capacity for judging the honesty and general reliability of that person. They judge him by all sorts of things. They know whether or

not he sounds like an honest person. But when they look at the printed page they haven't the logic or the information to judge the validity of the cold abstractions of print. They are afraid to trust themselves to the printed page because they can't see the human being behind it. I don't believe librarians are sufficiently aware of that fact. I don't believe they realize, and I know that teachers in colleges are unaware of this fact, that there are vast numbers of people who will let you talk to them about anything and will do their best to follow you and come to some sort of decision on the issues involved provided it is transmitted to them through personality. They feel a moral capacity with regard to personalities. They never think of reading anything \* \* \* I am convinced that that group of people is the bulk of the population of any ordinary American town.

### EMPHASIS ON READING BY FORUM LEADERS

On the basis of what Mr. Bryson says, it seems logical to have this acquaintance and confidence fostered by a personality—the forum leader. We need only to examine our own experience to see that the personal recommendation of a book far outweighs that of some anonymous printed list, be it only the recommendation of some casually met stranger. Librarians know this. They know what results the day after some minister mentions a particular book in his sermon. They know how a puzzled reader will say to a library assistant, "Which do you think I would like best?" and how readily and confidently he takes the recommendation.

There is little question that the power of the forum leader to stimulate interest in reading is greater than that of any other person or agency concerned. If possible he must emphasize not only particular books but the value of reading in general, how to read, how to find one's way in print, etc. The best recommendation is the casual one in the course of the regular talk. A preliminary sermon on reading is never so effective as a few words dropped in here and there as an added thought. Genuine interest in the benefits of reading and in the books recommended are of course his most valuable aids.

William F. Adams, one of the early Des Moines leaders, used to insert an effective kind of book intermission in the middle of his talk before a study group in connection with the forums. He

had brought 20 or more books from the public library and spread them on the table before him. He would pick up one and then another, characterizing the author, the point of view, the scope, the value of the contribution, the readability, all from personal familiarity, and then auction them off as loans to those bidding highest interest in each type of book.

A number of the libraries replying to our inquiry on library-forum relationships stressed the need of leaders to familiarize themselves with the more popular literature of the subject, to try to understand and be tolerant of the public's need and preference for the simpler, briefer, more popular treatments. (This whole matter of a more readable literature will be discussed at length later.) It is very difficult for the specialist who needs the most accurate and comprehensive of source materials to achieve a tolerance for the primer which to him is often inaccurate because it tends to simplify complex and many-sided questions and to give only a partial and blurred view of a subject. Yet such patience with the fumbling inaccuracies of the beginning learner—whether a child or an adult—is essential in an educator, and, as emphasized earlier, the new form is demanding in its leaders the point of view of a popular educator.

The following quotations typify the comment of the librarians on this need.

In my opinion librarians would do well to begin with the leaders, themselves. I have noted that those who lean most heavily upon us for bibliographies and reading lists are apt to be least successful in stimulating reading. If the teachers of adult groups would spend more time with books in the library they would transmit some of the enthusiasm acquired to the group.

Another librarian writes:

It helps most when the forum leaders mention the books specifically by title. It helps *if the forum leaders have read the books themselves*. Some of the forum leaders are themselves uninterested in the popular brief books and pamphlets, preferring the large scholarly works. But the public likes the briefer, more readable treatments and it is well for leaders to make a special point of reading and becoming familiar with the material of this type so they can recommend it to their listeners. Our forum leaders are fine. They know their subjects. They are splendid to work with. But

they know college students better than they do the general public. And the public forum is still a new thing to them, as it is to some of the rest of us.

That the practice of calling attention to the reading opportunity from the platform is not common is shown by the response to our inquiry. Only 30 out of 83 answered affirmatively to the question, "Has the advantage of following discussion by reading been emphasized by forum leaders?" Seven reported emphasis on it by special announcements in book lists, eight in newspapers, and five "in other places and ways."

### INFLUENCE OF THE LIBRARIAN AT THE FORUM MEETING

Undoubtedly the forum leader has the most power to stimulate reading. The public, of course, expects the librarian to recommend his own wares. Nevertheless, the next most potent method of educating the forum attendants to the idea of supplementary reading is for an experienced librarian to be present at each meeting. There is a great opportunity for teamwork between the leader and librarian at a meeting. The leader gains attention for reading, puts his prestige behind it, and then tosses part of the opportunity of answering specific inquiries after the discussion to the librarian. The leader should answer some of these inquiries about specific books himself—some people will want *his* recommendation only—but his hands are usually full with post-mortem questions at the close of each meeting and a librarian with a table of books, pamphlets, and reading lists near the exit of the meeting place, will salvage many inquiries that would otherwise be lost or dealt with hurriedly by the leader.

The librarian should at least be introduced at each meeting, and if possible have a few minutes for some remarks so that his voice can be heard and his face seen and the audience can decide whether it thinks his recommendations can be trusted, as Mr. Bryson suggests. This little ceremony is of real importance to combat the timidity which deters so many from asking questions about something of which they are ignorant. For this reason the librarian should emphasize that he is there primarily to receive

questions and give advice on reading and only secondarily to stamp and lend books. He should especially emphasize the library's willingness to provide a confidential clinic on individual reading problems. The poor or inexperienced reader is ashamed to betray his weakness in this respect unless frankly invited to undertake a trial-and-error experiment in consultation with a sympathetic librarian until he finds the type of thing he can read with satisfaction.

Obviously this will require librarians with personality and ability. A problem arises in obtaining the services of enough qualified librarians from public libraries, most of which are already understaffed. The Wichita City Library, in its noteworthy service to the Federal Forum Demonstration in that city developed the scheme of using librarians from its main library, branches, and school libraries who were interested in the forums and would probably attend anyway, allowing them to use the overtime accumulated in short vacations at Christmas or other convenient times. The value of this personalized service of active, experienced librarians, is emphasized by leaders who have observed the response here and in other forums where they had lectured and where such service was not available. It will be interesting to reproduce the following memorandum of suggestions given these forum librarians by the library administration:

#### WICHITA CITY LIBRARY

##### FOR LIBRARIANS AT FORUM CENTERS

1. Be on hand 15 minutes before meeting begins.
2. Have library display table located as near as possible to the entrance. Usually it is best in the hall outside auditorium. Sometimes in rear part of auditorium.
3. Take books out of packing case and display them on the table, placing as many as possible so front cover will show.
4. See that reading lists are distributed to the audience *as they arrive*. When they enter building, and before they get into auditorium is best. (W. P. A. worker gives out the lists.)
5. Stop people as they enter building and ask them if they wouldn't like to look over the books on forum topics. Suggest that the discussions will be more interesting if one has read up a little on the subject beforehand. Especially



approach people you know, but don't be bashful about approaching all visitors. Try to get them to take books on future topics.

6. Make it clear that if they are not attending the meeting at this center the next time, books may be returned to main library.<sup>1</sup> Many don't intend always to go to the same center.
7. If you will read the books in your forum collection, it will help you to "sell" them to other prospective readers.
8. Be sure you are invited to make announcement at beginning of meeting. (During the first weeks of the forum.) Sit on front row when meeting opens, but as soon as you have made announcement retire to back seat so that you can quickly get to the books when meeting is over. Take one of the attractive "Headline Books" with you to show to audience. (If necessary to leave books unguarded in hall during meeting, the books should be put in box and locked up during meeting.)
9. Turn in report for each meeting of the number of books issued.
10. If speakers mention any of the books, tell them you are glad they did. We cannot make many suggestions to forum leaders but should express appreciation for any help they give us in calling the attention of the audience to our books. If the forum leader mentions a book which is not on our list, please let the librarian know immediately.
11. Following is a good form for your announcement speech. Be sure to include the items italicized. (This speech need not be used exactly. It is just a suggestion.)

"In order to help make the forum project a success the city library is supplying books on the various forum topics. It is felt that members of the audience will find the meetings more profitable and will be able to take part more actively in the discussion if they have read to some extent on the subjects which are being considered.

"There will, therefore, be a library representative here at each of the forum meetings ready to lend books to you *both before and after the meeting*. It is *not necessary that you return the book to the same building where you borrowed it*. The books borrowed tonight *will be due in 2 weeks* or at next meeting here if more than 2 weeks elapse between meetings. But if you are not coming to the meeting here 2 weeks from tonight, you may return the book to the main library downtown. The main library is open all day every week day and until

<sup>1</sup> There were about 15 different centers in Wichita where weekly forums were conducted.

9 o'clock each night except Sunday, and also, on Sunday afternoons from 2 to 6 o'clock for reading.

"We have books not only on tonight's topic but on many other topics which are to be discussed later.

"When you look at the books which we have on display you will find that the library *has kept the busy person in mind* in selecting these books. Many of you do not have time to read long detailed studies and I'm sure you will be glad to find in our collection a number of *short, concise books* like this one on ——— which gives interesting information in *an extremely readable form, and with graphic illustrations*.

"I hope you will stop at the library table after the meeting."

The Federal Forum Demonstration Centers have included on their staffs one or more "forum-librarians," some of whom had previous library experience and some teaching experience, whose duties have been preparation of reading lists, circulation of books, and registration of library borrowers at the forum meetings. They have cooperated fully with the public libraries, whose books and resources were used; they have handled the sale and lending service of pamphlets maintained by the forum administrations, and have made daily and monthly reports of book and pamphlet circulation for the Office of Education.

### NEWSPAPER PUBLICITY

Newspaper, local magazine, and radio publicity,<sup>2</sup> should be repetitive and frequent and should emphasize the values of reading supplementary to discussion. It should also serve to illustrate tangibly what kinds of reading matter are available in an effort to dispel the prevalent notion that there is nothing fresh, pertinent, brief, or of interest to the plain man. True, there is a dearth of such material. But there is also some available material readable enough to be of interest to a portion of the public which is not yet aware of its existence. Mere lists of undescribed books avail little. It is better to select a half dozen as bait and use the available space in playing them up a little. Let forum

<sup>2</sup> The Script Exchange Service, Educational Radio Project, U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education, will send illustrative material free on request.

leaders or administrators or librarians contribute some popular, brief article or interview on some aspect of reading and forums. Always in such articles the public should be reminded that the library is the community's center for informal advice on such matters. Of course, the library must prepare to make good on all such promises and should participate in the planning of such publicity.

Newspapers are interested in reporting what is done, of interest in the community. Therefore, when the library organizes a special display of books or pamphlets, takes a display to a conference or a club meeting, holds an afternoon tea for leaders of community groups interested in public affairs so that they may see a special display, orders a large number of books or pamphlets to meet an unusual demand, etc., news is created. Such a story writes itself and justifies itself to the editor. The appearance of such stories in the press from time to time popularizes reading. Such publicity says in effect that reading on public affairs "is the thing to do" and that the library is the agency on the job. One device which proved successful was the inviting of a local columnist to the pamphlet display. He was so impressed with the wide selection of pamphlet material that he devoted an entire column to an interesting and human story about it.

The radio can be used by the library as a means of informing people about books and pamphlets and stimulating reader interest in general. In most of the forum demonstration projects radio discussions were conducted by the resident forum leaders. One thousand three hundred and eleven radio forums were presented by the 19 projects. In some cases the city librarian was introduced to present reading suggestions, thus personalizing the library service available. In other cases the suggested reading was presented in "March of Time" fashion by various voices. Many times the program announcer would advise the listeners that they might obtain outlines of the subject discussed together with reading suggestions.

The radio has been used to announce the arrival of books being used in the forum or the special pamphlet displays. These announcements are sometimes included in the program of a general commentator who announces birthdays and community

meetings, etc. Another radio device which promotes reading is the dramatized book review.<sup>3</sup>

### READING LISTS

Finally, there is the publicity of reading by means of reading lists distributed to forum-goers. This is the most prevalent and probably, by itself, the *least effective* method of educating the public to reading opportunity. Of 48 libraries answering the inquiry, 31 indicated that they distributed lists of suggested reading at forums in their communities. Seven definitely replied that they did not distribute lists, and 10 gave no answer. In some of the places not replying there were circumstances which made the issuance of lists hardly feasible. The groups were small or they met in a library building where the books themselves were displayed, etc. Of the 83 forum managements replying to this question 43 indicated lists were distributed at meetings, 31 answered "No," and 9 gave no answer, which means that about 52 percent of the forums distribute reading lists.

Reading lists have their place. Some people, mostly those with well-developed reading habits, welcome them. They serve as a reminder that is often needed. But most people will do nothing about the suggestions in a reading list unless their interest has been keenly aroused previously by something else. Reading lists are not very effective *stimulators* in themselves unless their annotations are exceptional and pique the curiosity. Another difficulty, which will be discussed in the next section, is that the books they recommend are seldom ready at hand and there is not enough interest created to carry over until a person has the time to make a trip to a library and run the book down.

But in connection *with* the other stimulators of interest previously discussed, reading lists have a useful function as auxiliary tools. Books and authors recommended verbally are seldom grasped or remembered unless pencil and paper are handy. Hence, if the forum reader, or forum librarian, speaking of a

<sup>3</sup> For radio scripts on dramatized book reviews write Federal Radio Project, Office of Education, Washington, D. C. Ask for Treasures Next Door.

particular book, can refer to "No. 3 on your list," the list having been distributed *before* the meeting, its value is apparent.

Leaders' outlines and reading references are particularly valuable to teachers of social studies and to leaders of small discussion groups and clubs. They offer the kind of help that is needed by the more inexperienced discussion leaders and the person who is responsible for arranging a program on a subject with which he is more or less unfamiliar. The filing of leaders' outlines and reading lists on various subjects either in the forum headquarters or in the library has proved to be useful to teachers and leaders of group discussions looking for material.

### ANNOTATIONS AND DIFFICULTY RATINGS ON READING LISTS

Whether or not a book list is annotated is a matter of real importance. Titles these days are anything but descriptive and are often misleading. A brief note after each title *can* have a good deal of "sales value" if it is written with a view to rousing the curiosity and interests of the prospective reader. Even if the leader or librarian verbally characterizes most of the books on an annotated list, people will forget and will confuse the descriptions of the different books. Our inquiry indicates that about half of the forum reading lists prepared by libraries and about a third of those reported by forum administrators are annotated.

An even more important but little used aid is some means of indicating the relative reading difficulty of the different books on the list. Only about one-seventh of the lists reported in the inquiry have this valuable feature. It is not uncommon to see an enticing and accurate descriptive note of a book that turns out to be academic, long, and difficult. Annotations are practically valueless unless the reading difficulty of each item is indicated so that the layman can understand it. Every inexperienced beginning reader, baffled by attempting a too difficult book first, may be a prospective reader permanently lost. Conversely, a person wanting a thorough-going discussion may be equally disappointed to discover his choice is an inadequate pamphlet. It is only fair to tell frankly and as fully as possible what to

expect of each book. Every list should contain, as nearly as possible, something to satisfy different tastes and different levels of reading ability, and should give enough information to enable the user to make an intelligent choice himself.

As examples of interesting annotations the following are given from a reading list on the subject "Effective Voting" conducted by the forum leader, Walter J. Millard:

**JONES, J. CATRON.** Readings in Citizenship.

By a political scientist of great ability, it gives "background" to the entire subject. Somewhat technical. Available at University library only.

**FELS, S.** This Changing World.

The author has contributed liberally for many years to movements aiming at more effective voting. Easy to read and of general interest. Available at Chattanooga Public Library only.

**HOLCOMBE, A.** Government in a Planned Democracy.

A book to be well pondered; written by a college professor with sympathetic imagination—not as rare a combination as some low-brows imagine. Somewhat technical. Available at University library only.

**KNEIER, CHAS. M.** City Government in the U. S.

Another "best" book on city government. Contains the explanation of the Hare system given in the lecture. Easy to read and of general interest. Available at University library only.

**LIPPMANN, WALTER.** Phantom Public.

Written by Lippmann when he could think clearly and did not have to write unless he had something to write about. An excellent study of the opinion-making process. Easy to read and of general interest. Available at University library only.

**ROBINSON, JAS. H.** Mind in the Making.

A book an intelligent dictator would make compulsory reading before citizenship could be exercised. Somewhat technical. Available at Chattanooga Public Library only.

There can be symbols to indicate "easy," "medium," and "difficult" titles and the descriptive notes themselves can carry further characterizations, such as "for the beginner," "lucid," "nontechnical," "scholarly," "complete and comprehensive," "attractive format," "illustrated," etc. If possible it should state to whom the author addresses his work, that is, whether to high-school students, college students, laymen, the general public, or other classes. Always it should plainly indicate the size and length of the book or pamphlet by descriptive words and by giving the number of pages. Another scheme is to group the listings under such headings as "introductory," "popular," "advanced," "pamphlets," etc. In general there should be more of

the "easy" introductory books and pamphlets than "difficult," comprehensive ones on forum book lists.

The following example of a forum reading list has been fabricated out of imaginary book titles and authors in order to illustrate some of these points more exactly than they could be with actual books and authors.

THE ——— PUBLIC FORUM AND THE ——— PUBLIC  
LIBRARY COOPERATING

READING SUGGESTIONS ON CRIME: ITS CAUSE AND CURE

This list shows only a few of the *different kinds* of reading on the subject of crime that you can get at the library. Ask the librarians to help you find other books, pamphlets, or magazine articles that may suit you better.

The numbers at the left are library "call numbers." They will help you get the book more quickly if you don't find it on the display shelf of forum books.

The following three symbols will help you rate the reading difficulty of each book and pamphlet:

\*Simple, everyday language and ideas.

\*\*Fairly simple.

\*\*\*For the person who can read the average college textbook.

\*CRIME, by John Jones. Published by ——— N. Y. 1935.

364 An attractive, 50-page pamphlet written in the language of everyday  
J77 conversation. Gives a brief look at the main questions involved.  
Unbiased and pushes no one particular point of view. Good for  
the beginner.

\*\*DELINQUENTS AND CRIMINALS by John Smith. ——— N. Y.  
1934.

364 Written for the general public by a noted professor of criminology  
B88 to try to correct some false impressions about the criminal and how  
he got to be one. Nontechnical, trustworthy, full of interesting  
facts. A good second book for the beginner. 275 pages.

\*\*\*CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY by Thomas Brown. ——— N. Y.  
1934.

364 If you want to dig deeper into the reasons for the criminal's outlook  
B18 this book will not be too hard going if you have already some good  
general books on psychology.

Such a list might continue with samples of books or pamphlets illustrating the many other avenues of approach to the general

topic of crime, such as juvenile delinquency, gangs, case histories of criminals, broken homes, economic causes of crime, racketeering, politics and crime, the effect of crime stories and reporting in press, radio, and movies, weak spots in criminal legal machinery, prison life, etc. Oftentimes there are only a very few facts by which a given person's interest may be seized and it does not pay to be so brief that an insufficient number of choices are offered as appeals to a widely varied range of interests and reading abilities.

All reading lists should at least suggest that interesting material is available in magazines as well as in books and, if possible, give some enticing samples. For example, continuing our imaginary list on crime—

#### MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Here are samples of some of the more worth-while magazine articles on crime. You can read them in the library, borrow some of them, or the library can tell you where to buy back numbers. It can also help you to find other articles through The Reader's Guide or similar indexes to magazines.

- \*CRIMINAL AMERICA, by ——— National Review, May 1936.
- \*\*THE SCHOOL, THE FAMILY, AND CRIME, by ——— Educational Review, January 1936.
- \*\*THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN PENOLOGY, by ——— Penology Bulletin, January 1937.
- \*\*HOUSING AND CRIME, by ——— Reader's Magazine, June 1937.
- \*ORGANIZED CRIME, by ——— American Monthly, April 1937.
- \*\*THE PRISON INDUSTRIES PROBLEM, by ——— Penology Bulletin, September 1936.
- \*\*TOWARD AN EFFICIENT PAROLE SYSTEM, by ——— Criminal Law Quarterly, October 1936.
- \*CRIME AND YOUTH, by ——— Holt's Weekly, July 1937.
- \*\*LEGAL VERMIN AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE, by ——— National Review, July 1937.
- \*CRIME NEWS AND THE PROFITS OF THE PRESS, by ——— Reader's Magazine, May 1937.



## PAMPHLETS

About 15 pamphlets on crime, including the few listed above, are on display at the forum and the library. All of these may be borrowed. Some of them may be bought for from 10 to 50 cents.

The display copies carry the same symbols to indicate the reading difficulty as are used in this list.

If your first choices prove too difficult, too simple, too uninteresting or unsatisfactory for any reason, consult individually with a "reader's adviser" at your library until your particular needs are met. The library will welcome your comment, criticism, or suggestions on the list and the recommended reading.

## LISTS FOR PREPARATORY OR FOLLOW-UP READING

Some of the libraries and forums have emphasized preparatory reading by issuing lists concerned with the topic of the *next* meeting. The lists of the majority have been for the topics of the meeting at which they were distributed on the assumption that people would be most interested in follow-up reading. Presumably a combination of emphases would be most desirable and, if funds permitted, two lists could be handed out at each meeting, one covering that meeting's topic and another one covering the topic of the next meeting. In Wichita, where the preparatory as well as the follow-up aspect was considered, the forum leaders clearly recognized the effect of preparatory reading done by some people in bettering the discussions.

In Springfield, Mass., where the topics and speakers for the the whole season were well charted in advance, a book list in the form of a small pamphlet, attractive in format, and well annotated, for the whole series of meetings, was issued by the library early in the season. It was discovered that many who had been too busy attending forum meetings during the winter made use of this complete list and did an appreciable amount of follow-up reading the next summer.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this Springfield experi-

<sup>4</sup> For the interesting details of this reading list and the summer follow-up reading, see the report of the Springfield city librarian which is quoted on pp. 53-55 of this study.

ence, the Wichita library and forum management prepared a similar summary list in pamphlet form for the whole series at the close of the forum series. Many people complained that too frequent meetings left too little time to read and expressed a wish to catch up the reading after the forums closed.

The Hammond (Ind.) Public Library, where the librarian is on the executive committee of the Hammond Open Forum, has issued for several years an attractive printed folder which is a combination calendar and program for the season (giving speakers, topics, and dates) and book list (giving half a dozen selected library books dealing with the topic of each meeting).

### FORMAT AND OTHER DETAILS FOR READING LISTS

It is especially important that all lists carry the library call numbers for each book and clearly indicate which books are available at the public library (if all are not). It is also important to carry a sentence explaining that these strange numbers are library call numbers and that they will save the patron much time and trouble in getting the desired book at the library. This information should be given even though books are lent at the meetings. It is unsafe to assume much familiarity with such details on the part of the public. Lack of understanding of these small matters makes the procuring of a book from a library too discouraging a task for many people.

Many forums follow the scheme used at Des Moines of appending the book list to the mimeographed outline of points made by the speaker. This has advantages which are obvious. If, however, the book list can be issued separately, an attractiveness of format can be achieved, even on a mimeograph.

Of 40 forums replying to an inquiry, 20 indicated their lists were mimeographed, 13 printed, and 7 "other style." Of 33 libraries replying, 22 indicated mimeographed, 6 printed, and 5 "other style." Usually the cost and work of publishing lists is a cooperative enterprise.

## WHO PREPARES THE READING LIST?

In answer to the question, "Who prepares the reading list?" 49 forum directors answered: Forum leader, 20; librarian, 10; both cooperatively, 19. Thirty-nine librarians answered: Librarian, 19; forum leader, 2; both cooperatively, 18. (There was some overlapping in the two groups but several librarians answered for strictly library forums.) There are mutual advantages in the joint preparation of reading lists by leaders and librarians. It brings to the latter advice on what is sound and reliable as to content of the books, and it gives the leader the benefit of the librarian's experience with popular reading taste and popular reading materials which he may easily overlook. It helps the reading recommendations to conform more exactly to the special phases of the topic which the leader may intend to stress, and also acts to insure that no references are included for books that are not procurable either at the library or in the book market. Frequently the library may have only one or a few copies of a book suggested by the leader, but a dozen or two copies of another book or pamphlet equally satisfactory from the reader's point of view. There are many similar instances where smooth working conference machinery among all concerned with the forum produces greater effectiveness. More and more of this pooling of resources and points of view of different professional workers in adult education is taking place, the many benefits of which are apparent.

## THE POINT OF VIEW OF READING LIST RECOMMENDATIONS

There seems to be a rather general policy on the part of both forum administrators and librarians to have reading lists represent a variety of points of view. In our inquiry the question was asked, "Do the lists suggest readings from various points of view regardless of that of the forum leader (if there is one)?" Fifty-three forum directors and librarians answered "always"; 13 answered "sometimes"; and 11 answered "never."

It is sometimes difficult to find enough material on each of

several aspects of a topic to have each adequately represented. It therefore seems wise to aim to include books that in themselves survey all points of view impartially. We need more pamphlets like the "American Primers"<sup>5</sup> and the "Public Affairs Pamphlets"<sup>6</sup> which attempt this, and also compact brief books like those in the "Reference Shelf"<sup>7</sup> series which would do for many prevalent forum topics what that series does for popular school and college debate topics—that is, reprint in one compact volume a selection of worthwhile articles from pro, con, and general points of view.

Finally, lists should emphasize that they are merely suggestive of what is available. There should always be a note to the effect that there are other books, pamphlets, and magazine articles that may be of more interest to a particular individual and that the forum leaders and the libraries welcome further inquiries and requests for individual guidance. About two-thirds of the lists issued by libraries are reported as giving this invitation, and about half of those issued by forum administrations. In the interest of more satisfying reading recommendations it would seem advisable to ask for the reactions of members of forum audiences to the suggested books, etc., on the lists. This seems to be a practice with less than a third of the forums and libraries reporting.

<sup>5</sup> Published by University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill.

<sup>6</sup> Published by Public Affairs Committee, 8 West 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

<sup>7</sup> Published by H. W. Wilson Co., 958 University Avenue, New York City.

## CHAPTER III

### ACCESSIBILITY

READY ACCESS to the means of satisfying our momentary interests is increasingly important in modern life. The commercial world has recognized this but the educational and professional worlds, where the spur of competition is less operative, have been slower to utilize it. Many more interests bid for some share of a man's attention now than formerly, with the result that most of the spare minutes of his day are absorbed, and the things nearest at hand gain his attention, his time, or his money in preference to others less accessible for which he may care more.

The ever-present selling appeal of the business world has so accustomed us to immediate service in response to our slightest wish that we tend less and less to bother about anything that cannot be delivered at once to our door in answer to a telephone or post-card request. Every hour of delay in the satisfaction of an aroused interest weakens it. This is perhaps more true of the modern man than it was before the days of widespread electrical service and easy communication when people expected delayed satisfaction. As suggested already, the forum discussion can be made a powerful stimulator of interest in further study through reading. But every delay, every difficulty put in the way of satisfying that aroused interest weakens it.

#### READING MATERIAL AVAILABLE AT THE FORUM

This means that the right reading materials must be on hand and easily procurable at the forum. Experience seems to bear this out. It is not even enough to hold the meeting in the library building. The materials must be *in the room* and every effort made to make it easy to borrow or buy. The librarian at the Wichita Public Library writes:

Some of the forum meetings are in the same buildings where we have our school libraries. (The school libraries are a part of the public library system.) We found quite early in the season

that we could not issue books from all the school libraries. We couldn't get the people to walk down the hall into the library room! Instead the librarians had to set up a table just outside—or just inside—the door of the auditorium and display their books *where the people could not help seeing them*. So our method of working is now the same in all of the buildings, whether we have a library in the building or not \* \* \*. We have to take the books *to the people*. Having the books in the same building with the forum meeting was not enough. But putting the books under their noses and along their line of travel in and out of the auditorium did induce some of them to take the books home to read.

The librarian of the Des Moines Public Library recently arranged to have forum meetings held in three different library buildings—two of them branch libraries—as an experiment to try out several things. One of these was to see if people would borrow more books by reason of merely being in a library building. Again the experience at Wichita seems to be borne out—“having the books in the same building was not enough.”

A striking demonstration of the effect of this policy of “taking the books to the people” in Wichita is that the various books were borrowed from 2 to 10 times as often at the forum meetings as at the main library—where a special display case of forum books was maintained—depending on the relative popularity of each book and the number of duplicate copies available. This comparison would probably be even more impressive if it could be reduced to the number borrowed for each hour they were offered to the public, since those at meetings were available about 30 hours per week (about three 2-hour meetings per night for 5 nights a week), whereas those at the main library were available roughly a total of 75 hours per week and were borrowed partly by non-forum-goers (students in certain special university classes, special interest groups in the general public, etc.).

Probably almost every library could adduce some further evidence to show the marked effects of “taking books to the people,” putting them where they are easily accessible and near the main streams of traffic. One carefully measured experiment in the Milwaukee Public Library will suffice as an example. The pamphlets on social and economic topics were originally kept on the regular shelves scattered among the books in the places

determined by their respective book numbers. Then, as an experiment these pamphlets were put in "a separate, special collection which would be conspicuously and accessibly located." As a third step in the experiment they were, after several months, moved as a group from the Social Science Department on the third floor to the delivery room on the main floor, and placed near the special display collections of readable nonfiction and popular fiction in order to spread their "use among those who ordinarily exhibit no great interest in reading about current problems." The average circulation per pamphlet when on the shelves among the books was less than one in 3 months; in the special display collection in the social science room it rose to three and one half in 3 months; and in the delivery room near the main borrowing traffic it rose to four and one half circulations per pamphlet in 3 months. Circulation statistics do not measure the amount of profitable reading actually accomplished at home but certainly these figures indicate a greater probable use.

Further check indicated that "under the old system approximately 15 people drew pamphlets in a month's time. The special collection raised this number to 40, while its removal to the fiction department brought the readers to 45 each month. Since the circulation increased at a higher rate than the readers, it became evident that individuals were not confining themselves to single pamphlets but were in some cases drawing as many as eight."<sup>1</sup>

Our inquiry shows that reading material of some kind is displayed at only about 45 percent of the approximately 100 forums or discussion meetings which reported on this point. It is a safe assumption that among all existing forums, the proportion offering some reading materials at the meetings is much less than this since more than 400 did not reply to this particular question. A guess would be that reading material of any consequence is offered at hardly more than 15 percent of existing public forums. This includes also those forums where a small group of pamphlets are

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, Stewart W., and James, Marion E. Popularizing the pamphlet. *Library Journal*, 61: 671-673, Sept. 15, 1936. This article gives further interesting facts on who borrowed the pamphlets—their backgrounds of education, occupation, etc.

offered for sale. There are relatively few where any attempt to provide a thorough-going reading service *at the meetings* has been made. All but two of the Office of Education demonstration centers and a few others have provided some reading service at meetings. While a complete report was not received it appears that most of these lend reading material at the forums, that about half as many sell it, and some merely display it.

Two of the Office of Education demonstration centers have developed cases or kits which greatly facilitate transporting the books to the forum meetings. The one developed at Portland, Oreg.—a combination carrying and display case—is shown on pages 63-64. Wichita uses an inexpensive light-weight canvas-covered mailing case such as is sometimes used by students to mail laundry. The books are carried in these to the meeting either by the leader or the forum librarian. They hold about 50 small books or pamphlets. Each case also includes a pencil dater which records the initial of the leader along with the date. This initial serves to indicate which case the book belongs in when it is returned by a reader to the forum center or to the main library or its branches.

### BORROWING ROUTINES AND ACCESSIBILITY

A complicated borrowing routine, even where the books are available at the meetings, makes them, in effect, as inaccessible as the inconvenience of distance. There is a surprising amount of fear of library routine on the part of the uninitiated, due partly to a hesitancy to display ignorance. This undoubtedly deters many would-be patrons. Libraries must, however, have some means of knowing where their loaned books are and when they are due to be returned or the resulting lack of desirable books on hand would make its service so ineffective that patrons would after a time become too discouraged to try to borrow. It is a vicious circle. It seems necessary to require borrowers to register and to make records of their borrowings. Usually the presence of one's name in a telephone directory or some similar evidence that one is a bona fide resident of the community is all that is required in order that a person may obtain a library card. But in order that



this requirement of presenting a library registration card when one borrows a book may not become a deterrant to many forum attendants, it seems necessary to have a library representative at the forum, someone who is conversant enough with the use of the library's records and its registration policies to issue new cards, renew lapsed ones, and deal with cases where privileges have been withdrawn because of accumulated unpaid fines. Even then there will be limitations and difficulties. Each library will have to make whatever arrangements local circumstances will allow, with as liberal an interpretation of its rules as possible.

Wichita permits that "books may be checked on your name and address rather than on your regular library card." Portland, Oreg., advertises in the announcements and by posters to remind forum-goers to bring their library cards with them. A large poster set up over the display case of books reads "Have you brought your library card? These books circulate." Several of the Office of Education demonstration forums have provisions of one kind or another for issuing library cards at the meetings. During the period September 1936 to June 1937, the librarians at 8 of these forum projects issued 1,103 new library cards.

With relatively inexpensive pamphlets fewer precautions for their return are necessary than with books. Some of the forum administrations in the Office of Education projects have themselves established loan systems for pamphlets requiring only a person's signature for borrowing. During the 10 months of the 1936-37 season for the Federal demonstration forums a total of 62,459 pamphlets were sold and loaned at 17 demonstration centers.

### PAMPHLET DISTRIBUTION

Even more helpful than provision for borrowing pamphlets at forum meetings, is the opportunity to buy them. Many people prefer paying 5 to 35 cents rather than bother to read and return a borrowed copy within a given time. Bought pamphlets are apt to be passed on to others. Furthermore, the production of more worth-while, unbiased pamphlets on current, social, and economic problems is dependent to a large extent on building up

a reliable market for them. It would certainly seem that people drawn by public affairs forums would be likely consumers of public affairs pamphlets. Several recent praiseworthy attempts on the part of nonprofit groups to produce inexpensive, reliable, impartial pamphlets on current problems have demonstrated that it is very difficult to make sales even pay production costs because the audience for them is unorganized and unresponsive and the existing sales mechanisms are inadequate. Hence, whatever forums and libraries can do to train a larger reading public to an appreciation of good pamphlets, to improve distribution and sales facilities, and to create a larger pamphlet-buying public will eventually work toward the production of a larger and better pamphlet literature.

It costs almost as much to advertise, handle, and distribute a pamphlet as a book, and a pamphlet price for a single copy that would pay its distribution cost, if handled as a book, would have to be so large as to be prohibitive. Some very inexpensive pamphlets are, of course, available but they are usually subsidized by some group or individual having a special point of view to present. This tends to keep pamphlet literature a partisan literature. Furthermore, the subsidized pamphlet is frequently printed in very small editions which are quickly exhausted.

Forums, libraries, and adult education agencies have an opportunity to help in this situation by buying pamphlets in quantity and reselling at cost to a selected, interested audience. A survey at Des Moines a few years ago revealed that 44 percent of forum attendants would care to buy pamphlets on the topics being discussed if they did not cost more than 25 cents apiece.

Relatively little activity or interest in pamphlets on the part of forums or libraries is revealed in the replies to our inquiry. In answer to the question "Is there any special emphasis on pamphlets?" only 9 out of 83 forums answered "Yes." Nine out of 48 libraries concerned with forums answered "Yes." Nine forums indicated they were lending pamphlets and 14 were selling them. Six libraries were lending and five were selling them.

Many efforts have been put forward to create a sound basis for the mass circulation of pamphlets and inexpensive books. In Europe the paper-covered books selling for the equivalent of

15 to 50 cents are commonplace. In our early history the pamphlet was a popular medium for expressing ideas to a large part of the population. Attempts are being made to revive the pamphlet as an aid in adult education because of its brevity and low cost. Many university presses, national foundations, and educational and civic organizations, as well as some commercial publishers, are producing pamphlets which serve this purpose. Publishers of such pamphlets agree that their problem is mainly that of distribution.

**T**he INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC LIBRARY cordially invites you to see and examine a display of more than 700 pamphlets on Social, Economic and Civic questions.

This exhibit has been collected from more than eighty sources by the United States Office of Education in order to make more generally known the valuable and inexpensive material available to any group seeking the latest information on the problems affecting everyday living.

These interesting pamphlets may be seen in the Delivery Room of the Central Library through the months of April and May from nine A.M. to nine P.M. every week day, and from two to six P.M. on Sunday.

L. L. Dickerson, Librarian

*Announcement of Display Sent to Teachers and Leaders of Adult Groups Interested in Public Affairs*

An experiment has been conducted during the past year through the cooperative efforts of the American Library Association, The Public Affairs Committee, and the Office of Education in the field of pamphlet distribution. Thirty centers were selected in all parts of the country where displays of pamphlet material, including 600 to 700 titles as listed in the index of Public Affairs

Pamphlets<sup>2</sup> were established. Leaders of forums, discussion groups, educational and civic organizations, and educators in high schools and colleges were invited to review these displays and urged to order pamphlets they found useful to their work. A statement of the plan is to be found in an Office of Education bulletin<sup>2</sup> and a report of the results of the experiment will be found in the supplement to this bulletin being prepared for publication in the near future.

### ACCESSIBILITY OF MAGAZINE ARTICLES

A fairly good proportion of both forums and interested libraries indicate that references to magazine articles are included in reading lists, a fair number (16 libraries and 14 forums) say that the use of the magazine indexes such as The Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature are especially brought to the attention of forum patrons, and a few (4 libraries and 4 forums) report that magazine articles are duplicated to distribute. However, there is a strong probability, corroborated by the careful observation of a few libraries that have included magazine references on reading lists, that the actual use of the articles is almost nil. The location of a magazine article on the part of an interested forum patron necessitates his going to the library and searching it out and ordinarily it is a longer and more bothersome process to locate an article in a back number of a magazine than to locate a book. Of the three types of reading material—books, pamphlets, and magazine articles—magazine articles are perhaps most often suitable because of their brevity, conciseness, timeliness, and popularity of style but they are also the least accessible. The reprinting and *free* distribution of the most pertinent articles might offer a solution were it not fraught with the danger of infringement of copyright. The least carelessness in failing to obtain the written permission of both the author of the article and the publisher of the magazine, or in failing to note fully

<sup>2</sup> Public Affairs Pamphlets, an index to inexpensive pamphlets on social, economic, political, and international affairs. Contains an article entitled "Planned Use of Pamphlets." U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education. Bulletin 1937, No 3.

on the reprint the original source and the statement of permission, may cause a great deal of trouble.

One of the Federal Forum Demonstration Centers was able to mimeograph and distribute several thousand copies of an article on the Supreme Court controversy prior to the discussion of that subject in the forums. Such articles were passed around to houses and sent home to parents by school children.

Occasionally magazines such as the Survey Graphic have, or will have run off, reprints of articles in their magazines and will supply them inexpensively in large quantities. Such requests must follow promptly upon the appearance of the article if best reprint prices are to be obtained. It is unfortunate that no one apparently sees a satisfactory solution of the problem of making this most useful type of material more accessible.

#### DISPLAY OF FORUM BOOKS AT THE LIBRARY

The usual alternative to offering reading material at the forum meeting is to set up a special "Forum Reading" shelf, table, or display rack at the library and occasionally at branch libraries also. This seems to be about as frequent a practice as maintaining a special display at the meeting, and, as will be remembered, this is far from common. Only a few very special alcoves for forum readers have been reported.

We have already discussed the inadequacy of both special displays at the library and reading lists if either of these is depended on alone. Both are obviously of value as auxiliaries and are usually employed in addition to most book displays at the forum. Frequently the special display of forum books at the library arouses interest in the forums among library patrons.

#### DUPLICATE COPIES AND ACCESSIBILITY

Another important element in easy accessibility is a sufficient supply of duplicate copies of the more used books and pamphlets. The chance for a prospective reader to lose interest because of having to postpone its satisfaction is as great if he must "reserve" a book and wait for someone else to return it

as it is if he must wait until he has time to go to the library and hunt it up in the first instance. If there is advantage in having the reading matter *on the ground* at the time when interest is high, it is obviously essential to have a supply equal to or greater than the demand.

Early planning between forum and library can often obviate difficulty in this respect. There have been cases where the forum issued a recommended list of readings without first ascertaining what was available on the subject in the library and where the library had only one or a few copies of these specific books but an ample stock of others that would have been acceptable to the forum leader. If the consultation is enough in advance of the meeting date, the library is often able to order and have ready enough extra copies to meet the demand. Incidentally, it is almost as ineffective to have the library go ahead and issue a list without consulting the leader or lecturer and find its selections inapplicable to the special emphases of the talk and the discussion.

#### COST OF READING MATERIAL AND THE FORUM BUDGET

Libraries, especially during depression years, frequently have been too restricted in book funds to provide enough duplicates to meet the reading demands that could be stimulated among forum-goers. The Des Moines Public Library in predepression years had an annual book fund as high as \$30,000. During the early years of the forum this had been cut to \$5,000 and by 1936 had risen only to \$14,000. In the beginning years it was necessary to call in books from the branches in order to have one adequately stocked display shelf of forum books at the main library. Obviously there would have been little point in trying to stimulate more reading of books with no funds to meet such a demand.

At Springfield, Mass., this eventuality was foreseen and a special appropriation of \$400 for the first year (1935) and \$200 for the second year (1936) was made to the City Library out of forum funds by the forum sponsors to buy books to supplement the library's existing collection and to provide for the printing of

book lists. The books required in connection with the historical emphasis at Springfield were of a fairly expensive kind and in spite of the fact that the City Library of Springfield is a well-stocked library this additional subsidy undoubtedly played no small part in making possible the unusually large amount of reading done in connection with these forums. A portion of the fund was held in reserve to apply in duplicating the books that later proved to be most in demand. A considerable part of it was spent at the close of the season when there was manifested a large, accumulated interest in follow-up reading that people had had no time to satisfy during the busy round of meetings.

In the field of current social and economic problems it happens that there is a more plentiful supply of popular books and pamphlets—the kind most in demand by forum patrons—which are relatively inexpensive. The report of the Wichita City Library on the cost of providing a duplicate supply of reading matter for forum needs is in point and suggestive.

The amount of money necessary to be spent for reading material would vary, according to the length of time the forum runs, the type of subjects discussed, and the *number of different subjects discussed*. \* \* \* We have spent a total of \$258 for books on forum subjects. (Of course we already had some of the books.) We also spent about \$30 for covers for the pamphlet material which we cataloged and handled as we would a book. From our experience we think \$300 would be a fair amount to cover the cost of books and pamphlet bindings. However, we duplicated hardly any books. Most of our duplication was in pamphlets costing 50 cents or less. But it seemed to be the pamphlets which people wanted. \* \* \* Of many of the small popular books and pamphlets there are 30 copies. (All of these forum books were bought out of the library's own very meager book fund.)

These experiences seem to point to the advisability of considering the cost of reading materials one of the necessary items on the budget of a forum. Were the primary purpose of the forum, recreation or entertainment, this might not seem necessary, but when a forum becomes an *educational* project it incurs some obligation to provide educational materials. Unquestionably the library should be drawn on to the extent of its ability. The pub-

lic library should be—and there are signs that it is coming to be—the community center specializing not only in the storing and distributing of the materials for informal education, but also in advising on their selection and use. But where appropriations are too limited to allow the library to do the whole job adequately and especially when the duplicate material provided for a special adult educational project may have little use after the conclusion of the project—or even after a few special lectures—then it seems wise to provide for supplementary aid in the general budget.



## CHAPTER IV

### SUITABILITY OF THE READING MATERIAL

This is probably the most important of the three main factors conditioning the success of reading by forum patrons. If the material is exactly suited, if it gives full satisfaction to a large group, it needs less publicity and will be found even if relatively inaccessible.

### DEARTH OF READABLE BOOKS

As suggested earlier, most of us who read books and the better magazines for the sake of learning assume that this same opportunity is open to nearly everybody. If the other fellow doesn't learn by reading, it is because he is "incurably lowbrow" or just isn't alert enough to see his opportunity.

Even librarians and educators believed this until they became interested in popular education in recent years and discovered some very surprising facts. They have now found out that most of our books about serious subjects are either beyond the average person's reading skill or are so difficult and uninteresting that he is driven despairingly away after his first few attempts.

About a dozen years ago in this country educators of adults began to realize more fully that grown-ups out of school were grasping at all kinds of opportunities to continue their education throughout life. They didn't want more of the textbook and classroom experiences of youth, but they did want a chance to continue learning in a free and enjoyable way. We then became adult-education-conscious.

Among the early discoverers of the new "adult education" were the public librarians. They realized we had in the public library something well suited to the needs of this adult who wanted to keep on learning in his spare time. Some librarians began to advertise this in their gentle way and to adapt their machinery to this informal kind of education. One of the ways was to set up "readers' advisers," specialists on the library

staff who gave their whole time to leisurely, confidential consultation with the individual whose education wasn't all he wished it to be and who wanted advice on what to read to better it.

The readers' advisers had little more than started when a cry arose from all of them to the effect that they had only a pitifully few books on serious topics that their inquirers could understand or read with any satisfaction. "Readable" books they asked for, and that rather imperfect designation has stuck. Readable in the sense of understandable, they meant.

So the American Library Association set up a Committee on Readable Books, and sent an able librarian with a fitting background of experience in war library service, Emma Felsenthal, around the circuit of readers' advisers to discuss the readable book with them, to find out what a readable book really was, and to get the names of the few existing books that had proved readable in the experience of these librarians. Her brief list of such books, published in 1929,<sup>1</sup> contained also one of the first clear discussions of what makes a book understandable. The evidence collected from the readers' advisers by Miss Felsenthal showed that there were unexpected numbers of solid, intelligent Americans who were seeking some half understood goal of education or culture but who were disappointed in trying to reach it through books. Their schooling had been eighth grade or less. They had then worked hard earning a living for a decade or two, and such imperfect reading experience as "grammar school" had given lay unused and undeveloped meanwhile. Naturally they were balked in trying to read books written, most of them, by college-bred men for other college-bred men in words, sentence forms, and ideas familiar for the most part only in the college environment.

The journalist type of writer had already sensed an opportunity here and for a while the popularizer had his day. But there was too much jazz and too little reliable fact in many of their productions to give any lasting satisfaction to these masses of sensible but unskilled readers. Besides, many popularizers had not accurately sensed the need. They were clever but not clear.

<sup>1</sup> Felsenthal, Emma. *Readable Books on Many Subjects*. Chicago, Ill., American Library Association, 1929, 39 p.

They mistakenly thought that a staccato, story-telling style would be a substitute for simplicity.

The textbooks for immigrant and illiteracy classes come into a corner of the picture also. But the childish tone and the dullness of the school book carried over into these so-called Americanization books, and scarcely a half dozen of the scores of such books available would prove tolerable to the adult mind.

### WHAT IS READABLE WRITING?

A more thorough understanding of the problem was needed. It became apparent that the writing of readable books for these millions of intelligent mechanics, storekeepers, office workers, etc., was a very difficult art. It called for a combination of qualities hard to find in any one writer or specialist. About this time James Harvey Robinson, the historian, wrote a little book—*The Humanizing of Knowledge*<sup>2</sup>—appealing for “a new type of writer.” “For to be simple,” he said, “is to be sympathetic and to endeavor to bring what one says or writes close up to those one is addressing. \* \* \* And the great art in writing is not to exhibit one’s own insight and learning but really to influence those whom one is aiming to influence.” What then is this difficult art of understandable writing?

Miss Felsenthal and the librarians’ Readable Book Committee, aided by the experience of the library readers’ advisers, set down several requirements: (1) Simplicity of language; (2) nontechnical treatment; (3) brief statements; (4) fluency (not the textbook of chopped up bits of information); (5) adult tone; (6) vitality, or reflected enthusiasm in the author; (7) attractive physical format. In other words, mature ideas and interesting, boiled-down facts presented in the perfectly good and respectable English of conversation with which plain people are familiar, not the seldom spoken language of literary custom which shackles most book writers.

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<sup>2</sup> Robinson, James Harvey. *The Humanizing of Knowledge*. Doran rev. ed. 1926.

Mr. Bryson,<sup>3</sup> in his talk to librarians previously quoted, says:

Prof. T. N. Carver, who was with us (at Des Moines) last year, said: "When economists talk to each other they talk in their own jargon, but the man about whom we are talking as a reader has his jargon and it isn't mere simplicity. It is a jargon. It is a particular turn of phrase, a particular vocabulary, a particular way of saying things, and that is his language and he doesn't really understand anything that isn't written in that language \* \* \*". That requires, I think, that the person who writes this sort of new literature we are demanding shall learn thoroughly and completely and sympathetically the manner of speech of the man in the street. Simplicity is by no means enough. You have to have a new language.

### READABILITY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE FIELDS

When other educational opportunities were thrown open to the man in the street other adult educationists began to meet with the same difficulty which librarians had found. This was especially true where forums and discussion groups were dealing with social and economic questions. These people followed the forum leader as long as he talked the language of everyday conversation. But occasionally they asked him to recommend follow-up reading. Some of the keener forum leaders then began to discover that there was little in print understandable to many people who were perfectly able to take intelligent part in the forum discussions. One inquirer asked for something to read on the subject of war debts which they had been discussing. The leader recommended a long, thorough, technical book. Later he asked the man how he liked it and the answer expressed the reaction of many others—"I looked at it, I hefted it, and then I decided I wasn't that much interested in war debts."

When education came to the C. C. C. camps it had to make itself interesting or have no students, for the boys were not compelled to go to classes. Yet it was plain that many of these boys were genuinely interested in certain social and economic problems which they had already met first hand. The C. C. C. educational

<sup>3</sup> Bryson, Lyman. Public Forums and Readable Books. American Library Association Bulletin, 27: 636-650, Dec. 15, 1933.

directors were wise enough not to use schoolroom textbooks as fodder for the "bull sessions" on these topics.

Educational radio is making the same discovery. The Radio Committee of the American Historical Association in its new series presenting history behind the current news trusts scholars to produce the facts but employs professional broadcasters who know the language and psychology of the listening audience to rework and present them. So also in the field of parent education, field workers are discovering that even the relatively popular presentations of child psychology are not enough and researchers are analyzing the existing literature for its elements of difficulty and others are producing easy-to-read bulletins for parents of limited reading ability.

Meanwhile, Dr. William S. Gray and Dr. Bernice Leary<sup>4</sup> at the University of Chicago set about to verify some of the frequent complaints that most books were not understandable. They analyzed the difficulty of a representative sample of nonfiction books. They tested a fairly representative sample of adult readers for their ability to read material of varying degrees of difficulty, and matched the findings of the two tests. As a result they believe that for half of our adult readers there are few books except fiction, some biography, and a small number of travel books which they can read with satisfaction. A third of our adult readers have a reading ability of fifth grade or below which limits them to nothing more difficult than a few popular novels, such as those of Zane Grey, nonfiction for boys and girls, a few simplifications of grown-up books for school use. Furthermore, Dr. Gray measured only "structural" difficulty in these books; that is, such things as the number of different words per page, the number of hard words, the length and complexity of sentences, etc. If we also take into account the difficulty added for many people when a book is full of unfamiliar or abstract *ideas*, then the picture is even less hopeful.

The serious meaning of all this is that if a good half of our voters should wish to help themselves to more intelligent understanding of either personal or social living, they may expect very little help

<sup>4</sup> Gray, W. S., and Leary, Bernice. *What Makes a Book Readable*. University of Chicago Press, 1935.

from books except indirectly through some fiction and biography.

Dr. Gray and Dr. Leary found that most of the books on vital public questions, among those they tested, fell in areas "D" and "E" which are characterized as "difficult" and "very difficult" (from the point of view of structural difficulty—phraseology, vocabulary, etc.). Their studies also indicate that such books can be read with satisfaction by probably less than one-sixth of the adult literate population. In these tests, too, they made special effort to include all nonfiction books that librarians and adult educators considered "easy."<sup>5</sup>

It is true, of course, that our public forums at present draw somewhat more heavily from the "educated" sections of the population than from the uneducated. A survey in Des Moines revealed that while 38 percent of the total adult population of the city had less than 9 years of schooling, only about 20 percent of those who attended forums were drawn from this group, and that where 18 percent of the whole population had had 13 or more years of schooling, 38 percent of forum attendants were from this group having 1 or more years of college. However, about 62 percent of forum attendants had had only high-school education or less. Gray's evidence and the experience of librarians indicate that most available books in the socio-economic fields are too difficult or academic for the majority of this group, who attended the high schools of some 15 years ago, to read with ease or satisfaction.

But it is the hope that forums, as agencies of adult civic education, can to some degree, reach down into those levels which are beyond the influence of our more academic educational agencies. The great group of intelligent adult citizens who have never been to high school and never achieved the ability to read most of what has been written on civic questions, cannot be disregarded. An examination of statistics<sup>6</sup> of school attendance for those periods when the great bulk of our adult population 35 years of age and over (which predominates in most public affairs forums) would have been in the upper grades or high school, indicates

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 209-223.

<sup>6</sup> Bryson, Lyman. For Whom Are We Working? Journal of Adult Education, 5: 136-140, April 1933.

that probably not more than 10 percent ever had any secondary education. Such cold calculations are a pretty hard blow for the librarian and adult educator who sometimes hopes that his efforts may contribute to an increased public intelligence which will salvage democracy. We can hardly wait until later generations of better readers come along. Something must be done to bring reading materials within reach of the millions of adult nonreaders today.

### WHAT IS BEING DONE ABOUT IT?

There are now some signs of serious recognition of the lack of "readable" books and of action to relieve it. The American Primer pamphlet project for the C. C. C. boys has already been mentioned. More recently there has been set up at Teachers College, Columbia University, a "Readability Laboratory" through the efforts and help of the American Association for Adult Education, which has for some years listened sympathetically to the testimony of librarians and forum leaders. This "Laboratory" is experimenting in producing understandable writing, is testing its productions as it works, is training selected persons in revising manuscripts to make them more readable as well as in producing new manuscripts, and is advising some of the foremost publishers who are genuinely interested and are cooperating.

If we can judge from the few readable pamphlets that have been written, it seems that the readable book will be welcomed by the practiced as well as the inexperienced reader who wants a quick, interesting introduction to any unfamiliar field. It may prove to be, like the magazine digest, another essential time economizer in an age which demands wide knowledge but allows little time to acquire it.

But the readable book will probably not be produced in such quantities that the needs of the 40 million unserved readers will be met over night. Besides, other difficulties stand in the way of making the book a really effective carrier of education. There are many who have learned faulty habits in reading which make it a very difficult and tiring task. They recognize only letters and

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*PUBLICIZING PAMPHLETS*

single words at each glance and must stop and tediously fit them together. The good reader takes in the meaning of whole phrases and sentences in one sweep of the eye. Fortunately, we have learned how to correct some of these habits.

Then there is the problem of getting books within easy reach of everyone. Only a third of our population has good library service; another third has poor service; and the last third none at all. Book stores reach only the more prosperous and better educated classes of citizens, mainly those in large cities.

The first job, however, seems to be to make the book understandable to half of our adult population. The really interesting, understandable book will almost distribute itself.

It seems, then, that a long journey is ahead before books become the vital things in our national life that book lovers like to think they are.

### SPECIAL VALUE OF PAMPHLETS

The foregoing considerations apply mainly to books and pamphlets. In spite of the fact that most evidence available favors the pamphlet as more suitable and more popular for emphasis in public affairs forums, it seems that both librarians and educators have a deep-set habit of thinking first of the book and later of other forms of reading material. Undoubtedly the book has a place, but it would seem that the pamphlet or some brief treatment is best adapted for first use for opening up a subject, and that books would be for those who already had an introduction and were ready and interested enough for a more thorough exploration of a topic. However, only about 15 percent of the forums and interested libraries answered affirmatively to the inquiry, "Is there any special emphasis on pamphlets?"

But mere brevity does not constitute the sole virtue of the pamphlet. It usually is concerned with a very specific aspect of a topic. It discusses a special issue rather than a broad subject. The forum-goers "don't want outlines of things; they don't want primers. They want discussions of issues, and what they get of the elements of economics, political science, international trade, or anything else is to be made specifically applicable to

the issue which they came to hear about. \* \* \* You can sometimes get a person along, in his process of adult education, to the point where he wants a general statement of a subject, but that is a very late stage. It means that you have already done a great deal for him when he comes and says, 'I would like to know something about economics. What is a simple book on economics?' " <sup>7</sup> It is perhaps one of the main values of the pamphlet for forum use that it presents these specific issues with which forum attendants are primarily concerned.

It can also be said that in general the popular pamphlets on public questions are simpler and more readable than the books on similar topics. Certainly they are more favored and more read by the forum patrons. At least this is the observation of most librarians and forum administrators who are offering both books and pamphlets to those who attend and it is graphically borne out by a tabulation of all books and pamphlets displayed at the Wichita forum, which shows that the pamphlets (and particularly those rated "easy") enjoyed a much larger circulation than the books. This was partly due to the fact that there was a larger supply of pamphlets offered but they were duplicated largely because they proved to be popular.

### SUITABILITY OF MAGAZINE ARTICLES

The obstacle of inaccessibility with regard to magazines has already been discussed. It is difficult to make any general statement with regard to their readability since they vary so much, and because they have not been subjected to as careful analysis in this respect as have books. Gray and Leary <sup>8</sup> analyzed a representative sampling of magazines for structural difficulty (vocabulary, sentence complexity, etc.) and roughly classified their samples in three classes: "Easy," "average," and "difficult." The "easy" class was represented by fiction, "pulp" magazines such as *Aces*, *All-Story*, *Clues*, *True Romances*, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Bryson, Lyman. *Public Forums and Readable Books*. *Bulletin of the American Library Association*, 27: 640-646, Dec. 15, 1933.

<sup>8</sup> Gray, W. S., and Leary, Bernice. *What makes a book readable?* University of Chicago Press, 1935. Pp. 175-178.

The "average" class was typified by the American Magazine, Collier's, Cosmopolitan, Saturday Evening Post, Capper's Farmer, Liberty, etc. The "difficult" class was represented by Atlantic Monthly, Literary Digest, Pathfinder (a current events magazine for school use), Review of Reviews.

This is not encouraging, but these ratings are of course relative. It is reasonable to suppose that careful selection would yield as many suitable magazine articles on public questions as could be found among pamphlets. It is apparent that almost anything that could be written on social and economic problems must necessarily rate more difficult for this great group of unskilled readers than fiction or everyday household matters since the social science field is less familiar in either vocabulary or concepts than matters of common, everyday, personal experience which can be treated in the vocabulary of conversation and which are the materials out of which fiction and some biography are made.

Nevertheless it is undoubtedly true that most magazine articles and pamphlets on socio-economic matters could be made much more intelligible and interesting to the inexperienced reader by some conscious effort. For the most part these articles and pamphlets have been written by specialists who are not conscious of any need to be intelligible to a nonacademic reader. Roman L. Horne and others have demonstrated in some of The American Primer series<sup>9</sup> of pamphlets that topics in this field can be lucidly and accurately treated in the language of more or less everyday conversation, a language much more intelligible to the average man than that of the newspaper press in discussing such matters. We little realize how different the spoken English of everyday conversation is from written English. When most people take up a pen to write for publication they unconsciously use a distinctly different vocabulary and phraseology which sounds as unusual and meaningless to the average American as a book-learned foreign language sounds to a native. It is very likely that this English of conversation may prove to be an intelligible *printed* language for these millions of inexperienced readers, odd as it may look in print to those sensitive to literary style.

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<sup>9</sup> The Farm Business; Money; etc.

Incidentally some of these American Primers which present social science topics in a lucid conversational style were written by young men who more or less met the requirements suggested by Charles A. Beard who has been quoted as saying that a new type of writer on political science was needed and that it would be necessary to start when they were young and train them simultaneously in two things, the social sciences and the popular way of writing.

Another element is in the direction of content; the writer must select the facts he presents with a constant consideration of the informational background of his prospective reader, the untutored classes. He cannot presuppose too much foundation knowledge. He cannot indulge in those veiled allusions and asides that would be grasped by an Atlantic Monthly audience. Nor can he, on the contrary, stuff it so full of definitions and incidental explanation that he confuses his unpracticed reader. The Reader's Digest has, to a degree, mastered some of these knacks of straightforward, essential-fact writing. It knows how to keep hold of the reader's interest by marching steadily ahead with only main facts of a kind that can be readily grasped without undue explanation.<sup>10</sup>

This is more easily done when one is dealing with familiar fields. It is not so easy in the field of social sciences. Yet something of this kind is achieved by the summaries of current history that are given in *The American Observer*; a weekly newspaper intended mainly for civics students in high schools but very readable and satisfying for the adult general reader who wants interpreted, summary news on significant current happenings and hasn't the time or background to piece together numerous disconnected news items for a satisfactory understanding. Most newspaper editorials are over the heads of most of the readers we have in mind and are usually confined to too specific points of view. These brief summary interpretations in *The American Observer* are examples of a type of "editorial writing"—in its

<sup>10</sup> Ferguson, C. W. *Give the Public What It Wants*. *Publishers' Weekly*, 131: 32-33, Jan. 2, 1937. *Reader's Digest*, a success in magazine publishing. *Fortune*, 14: 121-124, November 1936. (Same condensed, *Time*, 28: 41-43, November 1936.)

pure sense—that is needed in our magazines and newspapers. They might serve as patterns of articles which leaders in forums of the Des Moines type might contribute to the local press on topics being discussed at the time.

### THE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ON PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Forum administrations have probably failed to utilize fully local newspapers as media for reading material in connection with topics being discussed at the meetings. The newspapers perhaps have been thought of mainly as publicity carriers for material *about the forums*. But the press has the most direct access to the average forum-goer of any medium of print. It is familiar to him. He may never read a book or a pamphlet but there is a good chance he will read something in the local newspaper, particularly something by a forum leader he has seen and heard and liked. Studies of reading in America reveal the fact that about 95 percent of adults read newspapers, 75 percent read magazines, and 50 percent read books.<sup>11</sup> Not all of the 95 percent read the news on political or economic matters but there is a likelihood that a forum patron would read material in the newspaper on such topics if it were tied up to the current forum discussion.

A good many local newspapers would gladly give space to such material if it were brief, readable, and given a lead with some local or current news value. The "interview" with forum leaders can be made to serve advantageously in this respect.

By way of seeing the possibilities for valuable forum reading through the cooperation of local press, the following review of what has been done in some cities will be interesting.

The Des Moines Register and The Tribune (owned by the same company) have been unusually cooperative with the Des Moines forums. Besides the usual news items about the forums, there have been (in the period November 1932 to October 1936) approximately 40 editorials dealing directly with the forums.

<sup>11</sup> Gray, W. S., and Munroe, Ruth. *The Reading Interests and Habits of Adults*. City: Macmillan, 1929. P. 262.

There has been a very great number of interviews given by forum leaders, many "letters to the editor," open forum type of material on the editorial page, and special articles on subjects discussed in the forums, many of them by the forum leaders, of which the following is a partial list.

We Soviet Wives—Mrs. Anna Louise Strong.  
Cuba—Hubert Herring.  
How to Read Your Daily Newspaper—Leon Whipple.  
Governmental Experimentation in Business.  
Moley Calls Brookings Institute Practical Governmental Laboratory.  
Third Party Only Hope—Milo Reno.  
Social Issues Before the Supreme Court—Felix Frankfurter.  
Distribution of Wealth—David Lawrence.  
World Court (and Growth of U. S. Supreme Court)—Harry W. Warren.  
Turning to Silver—the Alternative to Bankruptcy—George Cosson.  
Portions of:  
New Frontiers—Henry A. Wallace.  
American Way—John W. Studebaker.  
Sweden, the Middle Way—Marquis Childs.  
Lost Generation—Maxine Davis.  
Also, several by Alfred J. Pearson, Lyman Bryson, Dr. T. W. Schultz, Luigi Villari, and a series by Dr. C. H. Woody, forum leaders or lecturers.

In the period November 1932 to October 1936, inclusive, there have been in these two papers a total of 433 column inches of editorials, 9,182 column inches of news, and 973 column inches of pictures, making a grand total of 10,588 column inches, or more than 60 pages devoted to forum matters. This amounted to 1,189 different articles of one kind and another and 257 pictures.

In a number of the demonstration forums the leaders wrote interesting reviews on books being suggested to the forum goers which were published in the local press. Hundreds of column inches of newspaper space were devoted to news stories about the pamphlet displays sponsored by the Office of Education in 30 centers. In the 19 demonstration centers 98,504 column inches were devoted to the forums, which is the equivalent of 585 solid

pages of the average daily newspaper containing 8 columns. This included book reviews and special articles by forum leaders as well as editorials and news items.

### LEADERS' OUTLINES AS FOLLOW-UP READING MATERIAL

Finally, there are the mimeographed outlines of points made by the leader which have been distributed at Des Moines, Springfield, the Federal Demonstration Forums, and other places. This is an extremely important type of reading material deserving the leader's best thought in its preparation. It is a concise, impartial, brief survey whose chief value is that it is a reminder for the reader of what he has heard amplified at the meeting. The process of preparing a popular talk or outline of a talk often results in something approaching the ideal of "readability" that we have in mind for the nonreader class.

It would seem advisable therefore that this be something more than a mere skeletal outline, that it be a little more in the nature of a brief abstract that does not leave too much to the memory of the forum-goer, and that can have meaning and interest value for a person who has not heard the discussion.



## CHAPTER V

### SOME EXAMPLES OF FORUM-LIBRARY COOPERATION

ON ENTERING any new territory we welcome the detailed experience of all who have gone before us. Though we may not care to follow exactly the same routes, examining the procedures of others in similar situations helps to stimulate our own powers of suggestion and to evolve a plan of action for ourselves. For this reason we will set down here portions of reports of a few significant and suggestive experiences of libraries of different size and type in cooperating with forums and discussion groups. There are, perhaps, other situations as instructive as those chosen but sufficient detail on them is lacking.

Incidentally, in this reporting we will try to bring into focus certain other important cooperative relationships between forums and libraries that have not been emphasized in the earlier part of the study.

#### LARGE CITY LIBRARIES

##### (a) DES MOINES

The Des Moines Public Forums began a 5-year experiment in January 1933 under the administration of the city board of education and the then superintendent of schools, John W. Studebaker. The experiment was financed by the Carnegie Corporation and sponsored by the American Association for Adult Education, but was completely under the direction of the local school administration.

The special features which made it significant are well known.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Studebaker, J. W. *The American way*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1935. Ch. IV and V and appendixes.

— and Williams, C. S. *Education for Democracy*. U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education, Bulletin 1935, No. 17.

Woody, C. H. *Forum Facts*. *Journal of Adult Education*, 7: 290-296, June 1935.

Briefly they were as follows: The Des Moines Forum was primarily an experiment in adult civic education. It emphasized forums on public questions as an opportunity and obligation of the adult education program of public-school systems. It emphasized frequent *neighborhood* meetings in neighborhood public schools. It stressed expert leadership by men who were thoroughly grounded in their subjects, who were nonpartisan in their presentation, and who were able leaders of discussion. Most of these leaders were resident in the city for varying lengths of time.

From the inception of the forums there was the closest and most interested cooperation between them and the Des Moines Public Library. As mentioned previously, the library had suffered a reduction of book fund from a predepression figure of \$30,000 annually to \$5,000 during the first years of the forum, and its service was decidedly limited by this. The leaders worked closely with the library in preparing the lists of recommended books appended to the mimeographed outlines of points made by leaders which were distributed at meetings. The books available in the library were starred on the lists, which carried an invitation to ask for further advice and reading suggestions at the library. All books on all forum lists for the season were prominently displayed in a large display case marked for forum books which was kept for circulation in the center of the main reading and reference room at the main library. Relatively few of the special forum books were available at the branch libraries because of the shortage of book supply due to curtailed funds. No statistics showing the actual circulation of books to forum attendants are available except those from the general forum survey of May 1933, which indicated that 19 percent of those reporting some forum attendance had read parts or all of books recommended in the mimeographed reading lists.

The library has taken the initiative in the distribution of pamphlets. The librarian, Forrest B. Spaulding, writes in the early fall of 1936:

For over a year this library has been selling pamphlets which either are not available or are not pushed for sale by the local bookstores, at from 10 to 25 cents each, including such series

as the Public Affairs Pamphlets, Leisure League Leaflets, Headline Books, and the American Primer series. \* \* \* These are all displayed and offered for sale in the main library, and on occasion we have taken pamphlets related to the subject of discussion and sold them in connection with public forum meetings at centers outside the library.

It is our belief that we are rendering a distinct service by such pamphlet sales. The benefit to the library is that by purchasing them in quantities at dealer discounts, we are able to turn our profits into the purchase of additional copies, which are bound and circulated free to our patrons just as we circulate all books.

Beginning in the fall of 1936 forums were held in the regular library reading rooms of two of the branch library buildings. As an experiment one of these was held in a branch regularly open on the night of the forum in that neighborhood and another in a branch regularly closed on that night. Mr. Spaulding writes in late October:

I am glad to report that the forum leaders consider the forums held in branch libraries very successful. I have always maintained that there are some people who will attend a forum in the library who shy away at the idea of going back to the schoolhouse. This is proving to be true. It was our hope that with the forums actually held in the library, we could circulate more books on forum subjects at the time the forums were being held. It seems to make no difference, however. The majority of forum attendants come to listen and, to some extent, participate in the discussion. A minority continue studying the subject through books and I feel that they are the people who have always been readers and that they will come to the library for their material anyway.

I don't mean to give the impression that books on the subjects discussed are not widely read. As a result of the forum, our buying of books in the general class of the social sciences and government has greatly increased and the use of these books has increased. Probably almost entirely, however, on the part of those who were library users before the forums started.

Some of the forum meetings early in the series were held in the auditorium of the main library. Later special meetings for unemployed men were held in the "men's reading room" established in one of the basement rooms of the main library where unemployed men could pass the hours in reading, writing, and

studying without feeling conscious of shabby dress as they might in the regular reading rooms of the library.

(b) SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

The Springfield Public Forums began February 18, 1935. They also were sponsored by the American Association for Adult Education as an experiment on a little different pattern from that at Des Moines. The speakers, mostly professors from nearby universities, presented the historical backgrounds of the cultural and social development of the European nations in order to give a clearer conception of the forces operating in Europe today and their influences on American life. The second season, January to May 1936, concerned itself with oriental and American backgrounds. These were not neighborhood forums. The one large meeting was held in one of three centrally located auditoriums or high schools. The lectures were "scholarly but given in popular style." The audiences were large but there was little feeling of stiffness or formality about them. Obviously, a free discussion period was less possible in so large an audience (averaging nearly 1,000 per meeting) but each lecture was followed by a question period.

A forum of this type would, of course, draw largely from better educated sections of the community (53 percent had attended college and 35.5 percent high school; 15.2 percent had attended graduate school and 5 percent indicated they had attended only elementary school). This, and the fact that one would expect to find more interest in this type of program in New England, helps to explain the character and amount of reading done. As will be seen from the reports of Hiller C. Wellman, city librarian, quoted below, the suggested readings were books of a very substantial kind. Many were borrowed and the reading interest was sustained.

1935 PROGRAM

The reading lists suggested by the forum lecturers were checked over carefully with the secretary. The great majority of the books were already owned by the city library. The remainder were purchased, except a few which were out of print, not available in this country, or otherwise seemed unnecessary to buy. Such books were omitted from the bibliographies distributed at the lectures, so that all of the recommended reading

could be obtained at the library. Besides the books which were not already owned, a few duplicate copies were ordered for the main library and the branch libraries. In all, 86 books and 1 periodical were purchased at a cost of \$141.89.

All of the books listed in the bibliographies have been grouped on special shelves at the main library from which they could be borrowed for 1 week, renewable if not reserved by other readers.

Such books as the branches also owned were similarly grouped on special shelves. Nine hundred twenty-three volumes have already been borrowed from these collections, 794 from the main library, and 129 from the branch libraries. In addition, we know that a good many books have been borrowed in connection with the forums from the regular shelves but for these we have no definite figures. Perhaps 100 volumes would be a fair estimate.

Many people have been desirous of attending as many of the lectures as possible. As there were five each week, this left little time for reading. Many people have been heard to remark that they intended to do more reading as soon as the courses were over, and particularly during the coming summer. It is not unreasonable to expect with the close of the forums a decided increase in the amount of reading done. This prophecy is borne out by the fact that during the last 2 days of the forums, and the day after they closed 137 volumes were borrowed from the main library alone, whereas only 561 had been borrowed during the whole preceding 8 weeks. It may be noted that many of the books listed are fairly solid reading, the proportion of popular books being rather small.

The bibliographies were revised and printed in a 16-page booklet, giving the author, title, and library call number, with brief annotations. Seven thousand copies of this booklet were procured at a cost of \$138. About 2,000 copies were distributed to the audiences at the last three lectures. The remaining copies will be distributed at the library and branches and elsewhere \* \* \*

The original appropriation of \$300 for the purchase of books, etc., by the library was increased by an additional \$100 toward the cost of the printed reading lists, making a total appropriation of \$400. A balance of \$120.11 remains. A few books previously ordered have not been received, and the remainder of the money is available for the purchase of duplicate copies as the increased reading demonstrates the need. The increase in the demand for the books following the close of the forums has already shown the advisability of purchasing additional books, and orders for about \$40 worth of books are now being forwarded.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> From the annual report of the Springfield (Mass.) City Library Association for 1935.

## 1936 PROGRAM

The titles of books suggested for reading by the forum lecturers were checked and edited, and 7,000 copies of an attractive pamphlet were printed, the cost being defrayed by the forum fund. These reading lists were ready for distribution at the main library and the six branch libraries, as well as at the lectures, soon after the forums began.

In addition, \$200 from the forum fund was provided to buy books supplementing the library's collections. These and many other volumes relating to the subjects discussed were prominently displayed at the main library and all of the branches throughout the forum period.

Last year, at the close of the lecture season, 923 books had been borrowed from these special collections; and others, which it was not feasible to count, from the regular shelves. This year 1,249 books were similarly drawn from the special collections. The marked increase is explained probably by the fact that fewer lectures each week left more time for reading, and perhaps partly because it was possible to print the reading lists earlier.

A year ago, within three weeks after the close of the forums, nearly five hundred additional volumes were drawn, and the books continued in request throughout the spring and summer. Without doubt, the demand for this season's books will continue for many months to come.

The extensive reading, coupled with the creditable attendance at the lectures, is the best evidence of the educational value of these forums. For however much one may gain from listening, more may be gained by reading up the subject. The books provided are, in the main, solid treatises on the history and the cultural and economic conditions of the countries covered. Anyone who has read the books has obtained more than superficial knowledge. The lectures should give a stimulus to this reading, and there is ample evidence that they have done so.<sup>3</sup>

### (C) WICHITA, KANS.

There has been unusual emphasis on reading in several of the Office of Education demonstration centers. On the W. P. A. staffs of most of the centers there have been one or more special "forum librarians." Several of the forum managements have themselves sponsored the sale and lending of pamphlets. The

<sup>3</sup> From the annual report of the Springfield (Mass.) City Library Association for 1936.

local libraries have cooperated throughout and have been the base of operations and, to some extent, of reading materials for the special forum librarians. The library resources in some of the localities have been limited, but there has been an unusual readiness to help with such facilities as were available on the part of the librarians in these localities. In other localities there have been both good library resources and enthusiastic cooperation.

The Wichita City Library has been referred to frequently in this study. Its librarian, Ruth E. Hammond, and the staff have welcomed the coming of a forum demonstration as a chance to experiment in effective exploitation of reading opportunities. The following excerpts from Miss Hammond's informal "Notes on public forum project," sent in response to our inquiry, should therefore prove unusually helpful and suggestive.

DECEMBER 1936.

The library has purchased books and pamphlets on forum topics and has had books available at every forum meeting. There has also been a display case of forum books at the main library. \* \* \*

Library staff members who have acted as librarians at forum centers think that the circulation of books at forum centers has been a net gain. That is, they think most of these books would not have been borrowed had the readers had to come to the library for them.

Perhaps the circulation of these extra volumes has in itself not been enough to justify the time which has been spent by the library staff. The effort has been justified, however, on other grounds:

1. It has been good advertising for the library. The presence of the books and the librarian, as well as the announcements made by librarians and forum leaders, have called the library to the attention of many people who were hardly conscious of the library's existence. We think it has built good will for the library.
2. Some nonreaders have been encouraged to borrow books. One forum librarian reports, "Many who checked books admitted rather sheepishly that they had not used their library cards for years, or did not know where it was, or that they had never used the public library."
3. We feel rather certain that considerable reading will be done after the forum ends. A number of people have said that they were saving all the reading lists and intend to do quite

a lot of reading when they are not so busy attending forum meetings. We will have a printed list to distribute the last week and after forum ends, gathering all the mimeographed reading lists into one compact, printed folder. (As was done in Springfield, Mass.)

4. It has been an interesting and valuable experience for the library staff.
5. The appreciation shown by the superintendent of schools, the forum leaders, and the public has made us feel well repaid.

During the first 2 months each center has had a meeting about once in 2 weeks. Thus, with each forum librarian having only one center, each has been scheduled for 1 night every 2 weeks. The forum librarian goes on duty at 7:30 and issues books until the meeting starts at 7:45. Then she listens to the discussion until it adjourns at 9:15. She stays until about 9:30 issuing books. She is allowed plus time credit for the 2 hours each evening spent at a forum center. This has made about a half day's plus time each month. The plus time has been taken off at week ends, at Thanksgiving, or at Christmas.

The schedule is to be changed, and for the next month there will be fewer centers, with each center having a meeting once every week. Thus, with the new schedule, fewer forum librarians will be scheduled, but those few will be scheduled for 1 night each week and will accumulate about 1 day's plus time a month.

In planning such a program it must be carefully considered whether it will be necessary to employ substitute help when plus time is taken off by staff members who have acted as forum librarians.

Wichita has been able to arrange this because all of our branch libraries are *school libraries*, which are not open in the evening and which are closed during school vacations. (Our branch library program is in the embryo stage.) The school librarians can be spared during Christmas vacation, Thanksgiving, and at week ends, when they take off their plus time, better than some other staff members might be. \* \* \*

It has been understood that staff members who are scheduled for forums are very free to exchange nights or to ask for a substitute to be employed, in case of conflict with an important personal engagement. Substitutes have been employed about 6 evenings during the 3 months.

The total expense for substitute help for the evenings and to fill in for staff members who were taking plus time off has been about \$10.

In addition to the work at forum centers, it takes about an



hour a day at the main library to "slip" the books which have been returned and to get the books ready to be sent to the forum office.

Each forum librarian fills out a report of books circulated at each meeting, and it takes about 2 hours a week at the main library to complete these reports. (Reports required by the Office of Education in Washington on the public forums.)

The library provides for each of the three forum leaders a small lightweight suitcase which holds about 50 small books or pamphlets. (Cases such as are sometimes used for mailing laundry.) In each case, in addition to the books on this leader's subject and a few books on other subjects, is a pencil dater with ink pad and rubber dates. The stamp is set up with the initial of the forum leader in front of the date, so that when the book is returned to the main library it can easily be seen in which suitcase it belongs. Book cards are kept at main library. The book, if returned to the main library, is slipped and put in a package for the W. P. A. forum worker who calls each morning, or for the library truck. The books are taken to the forum office and added to their proper collection in the suitcase. The forum leaders, or their W. P. A. secretaries, take the suitcases with them to the meetings.

A mimeographed reading list was distributed at each meeting, together with the lecturer's outline of the topic. We made most of the reading lists, though some were made by the forum leaders themselves. Although all of the reading lists include magazine material, we know of only one person who has come in to read the magazines on the list.

The library has worked with the forum leaders in making out reading lists. We feel that the time spent in making book lists has been well spent. \* \* \*

We shall have before the forum ends<sup>4</sup> a printed list of books on the forum topics, similar to the list of forum books printed by the library of Springfield, Mass. The paper is to be paid for from public forum funds; the printing is to be done by the school printing shop, and paid for by the board of education, by which our forum is sponsored; while the reading list is being compiled by the public library. I believe the total cost of paper and printing will be about \$50. \* \* \*

In Springfield they made a point of having the printed reading list ready when the forum began. They could do this because they knew their subjects in advance. We could not possibly have done it, as subjects have been decided on only a few weeks

<sup>4</sup> This report was written before the close of the forum. The summary book list was issued as planned.

in advance. Consequently, we have depended on the mimeographed lists, and the printed list will be a summary—or rather a selection from the books on the mimeographed lists. \* \* \*

We think we would have issued more books if meetings had been scheduled from the start so that each center had a meeting every week. Some people hesitated to take books because they didn't feel sure of being able to return them at a convenient time. If they were going rather regularly to the same meeting 1 night each week they would feel more sure of getting their books back on time and would be less hesitant about borrowing them. (Our schedule of meetings has been changed more than once, so that there is a feeling of uncertainty as to the times of future meetings, and there has been an interval of 2 weeks or more between meetings.) \* \* \*

We have no way of telling whether the books on forum topics which circulated from the main library were borrowed solely as a result of interest stimulated by the forums. Many of them would probably have circulated anyway. We know that some of the books on crime were borrowed by students from college sociology classes. \* \* \* Also, some of our patrons who were not regular forum attendants were pleased to come across such interesting looking books as, for example, the book on "Dictatorship" in the Headline Series. The cover of this book is one that attracts attention, its subject is of general interest, and it is readable looking, so it circulated almost "on sight." However, it is true that many of the books and pamphlets would not have been in the library had they not been purchased especially for the forum. Also, we keep all the books on the reading lists in a special display case plainly labeled "Public Forum Books," so that any one who takes them knows what he is getting. \* \* \* A guess would be that probably about half of the circulation of books from the forum display case at the main library is a direct result of interest stimulated at the forums. \* \* \*

Our public forum books at the main library are in an [open] *display case*—not just on the shelves of a bookcase. The books are so placed in the case that people can see the front covers of some of the most attractive books and not just the backs of the books as they would if the books were in a bookcase. This is especially important for pamphlets. \* \* \*

This display case of public forum books at the main library has helped the forum publicity. Some people who came across the display case but who had not attended forum meetings asked questions about the forum and had their interest in the

forum aroused through the information given them about it by the library assistants who answered their inquiries.

As to the comparison between the circulation of certain books before and after the forum started, we haven't much to offer.

\* \* \* However, before the forum started we were getting along quite well with eight copies of "Sweden, the Middle Way," with these copies all in constant circulation but seldom any waiting list. Now, we have 12 copies and also have a constant waiting list of 2 or 3 people who have filled out reserve cards for the book.

Also, the following statistics for the circulation of books in the "300's" [social sciences] for the 4 months' period of the past 2 years is rather striking. The interest in social and economic problems has been for the last year or two not quite so intense as it was during the worst years of the depression when people were so interested in reading about the causes and possible cures for economic ills. But most of our forums have dealt with economic or social questions and these figures show an increase of 1,309 in the circulation of books on these subjects while our *total nonfiction* circulation during this same period shows a slight decrease.

*Circulation of Books in the "300's" [Social Sciences]*

Month	1935	1936	Gain
September.....	663	1,055	392
October.....	1,001	1,320	319
November.....	1,054	1,383	329
December.....	1,037	1,306	269
Total.....	3,755	5,064	1,309

We have emphasized reading *as preparation* for attendance at discussion meetings, and people have been more interested in this up to the present time than they have in follow-up reading. The forum leaders say that the *discussions improved* a great deal during the first few weeks, and they attribute this improvement to the fact that people were reading on the forum subjects and, because of their reading, were able to ask more intelligent questions. \* \* \* People are constantly asking what subject is to be discussed "next time." We think there will be considerable interest in *follow-up* reading after the forum ends by individuals and by small study groups and discussion groups.

Some of the forum leaders have been very fine about mentioning the library books each time and encouraging their reading. Other

forum leaders did this infrequently. It helps most when the forum leaders mention the books specifically by title.

It helps if *the forum leaders have read the books themselves*. Some of the forum leaders are themselves uninterested in the popular brief books and pamphlets, preferring the large scholarly works. But the public likes the briefer, more readable treatments, and it is well for the leaders to make a special point of reading and becoming familiar with the material of this type so they can recommend it to their listeners.

It helps if *subjects are selected some time in advance* so the library can have plenty of time to *prepare reading lists, to purchase and catalog new material* which is needed, and to *have the books read by library staff members* who are to act as forum librarians. In this, as in all other departments of library work, better work can be done from the standpoint of both quality and quantity if the library worker knows her books and can tell people what is in them and answer questions about them.

Too frequent changes of subject are a disadvantage to the library. If each subject is discussed in various phases for a period of 3 weeks or more, the books are used to better advantage than when there is a change of subject each week.

There should be a staff meeting of forum librarians—or several such meetings—to discuss the books on the reading lists. Those who are to be called upon for substitute work should be included in these meetings. We haven't had any staff meetings for this purpose, but we think we should have had them in order to do a really good job of getting the books read.

If it is not possible to find the time for library staff members to issue books at forum centers, *we think it would be better to have books available at forum centers with W. P. A. workers in charge of issuing books than not to have the books there at all.*

The use of W. P. A. workers is probably more feasible in larger cities where well-qualified professional workers are on relief than in the smaller cities and towns where most of the relief workers available are manual or clerical workers.

If W. P. A. workers are to be used to issue books at forum centers they should be given time as part of their regular schedule *to read the books*, so they can tell prospective readers what the book is about.

It is far better, however, to have members of the library staff doing the library work at forum centers because—

1. They know the books better.
2. They know a good many of the readers.
3. They can answer questions about the library more intelligently.

## PORTLAND LIBRARY DIVISION

Early in the project, the director arranged with the public library, to have all pamphlet and other material purchased by the forum cataloged so that both books and pamphlets could be issued on library cards at the forum meetings.

There was, of course, no definite check on the increase of reading due to forum programs, but "Unofficially, the head of the circulation department has stated that of the 1,080 books circulated by the forum during 5 months, many would undoubtedly never have left the shelves this winter but for the demand created by Dr. Sutherland's forums on social and economic problems."

*Continuation work by central library.*—A special letter, urging following up forum attendance by reading and study, was sent by the head of central library to a list requested from the forum staff.

An open-air reading room has been established for the summer, and the librarian has asked for pamphlets dealing with leading subjects.

*Building the forum library.*—All of July and half of the month of August were spent in examining, selecting, and ordering pamphlets. Much experimentation in binding materials resulted in the use of a tough brown paper which stood much wear and was not unattractive. This was also used for large charts and posters. Pamphlets were sewed, glued, or stapled into the bindings. Pockets were provided in the covers of many pamphlets for leaflets, clippings, etc. In binding leaflets, an attempt was made to present more than one side of the question under the same cover.

By the opening date of the forum nearly 1,200 pamphlets, magazine articles, bulletins, periodicals, and booklets were ready for circulation. These have been supplemented constantly by securing latest material from government departments and publishers. The small profits accruing from the sale of some publications, and the "conscience money" for overdue pamphlets were used to buy other materials.

Boxes were constructed for carrying books and pamphlets to meetings and for displaying them there. (See illustrations, pp. 63-64.) "These have proved very useful, and will help to solve the problem of storage for the summer, as they can be locked, thus keeping library records, bibliographies, and the more expensive pamphlets safe and dry."

Timely little posters were displayed at meetings, such as "Have you brought your library card? These books circulate." Small notices on the use of the classification system in the library were circulated with or in pamphlets at the beginning of the program.

10¢

# PUBLIC AFFAIRS

10¢

## *Pamphlets*

INCOME  
*and* ECONOMIC  
PROGRESS

LABOR  
*and the*  
NEW DEAL

SECURITY  
OF THE DOLLAR

CREDIT  
CONTROL

The South's Place  
in the New Deal

INCOME  
*and* ECONOMIC  
PROGRESS

LABOR  
*and the*  
NEW DEAL

OUR GOVERNMENT  
FOR STATES  
OF SERVICE

SECURITY  
OF THE DOLLAR

**DROP DIME HERE**

*Libraries Sell Pamphlets*



*Appeal to Reading Interests*

# PORTABLE BOOK CASE

IN USE AT THE "PORTLAND PUBLIC FORUM"

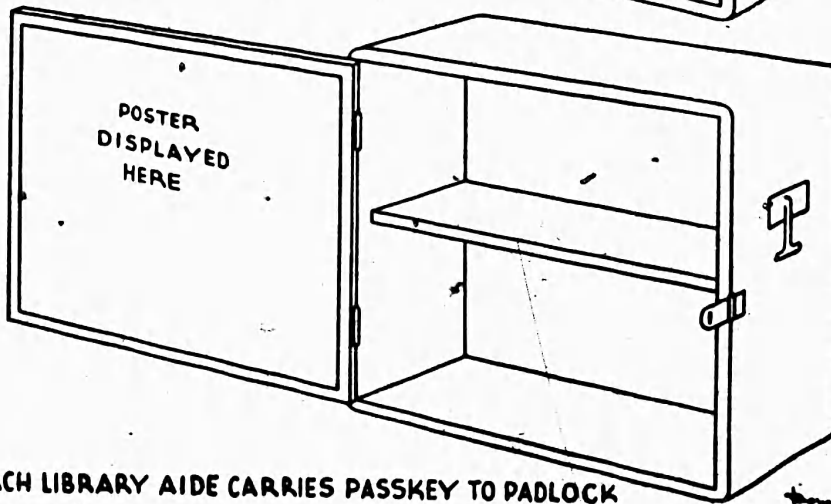
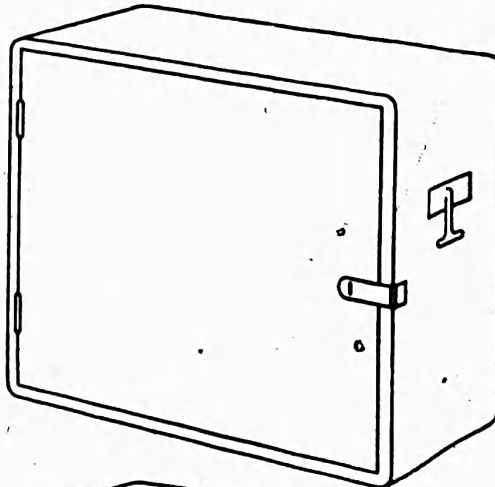


## SPECIFICATIONS...

HEIGHT..OUTSIDE..22 1/2"  
WIDTH " 25 1/2"  
DEPTH " 8 1/2"

DOOR } .....5/8" PLYWOOD  
BACK }

SIDES }  
TOP } .....3/4" FIR  
SHELF }  
BOTTOM }



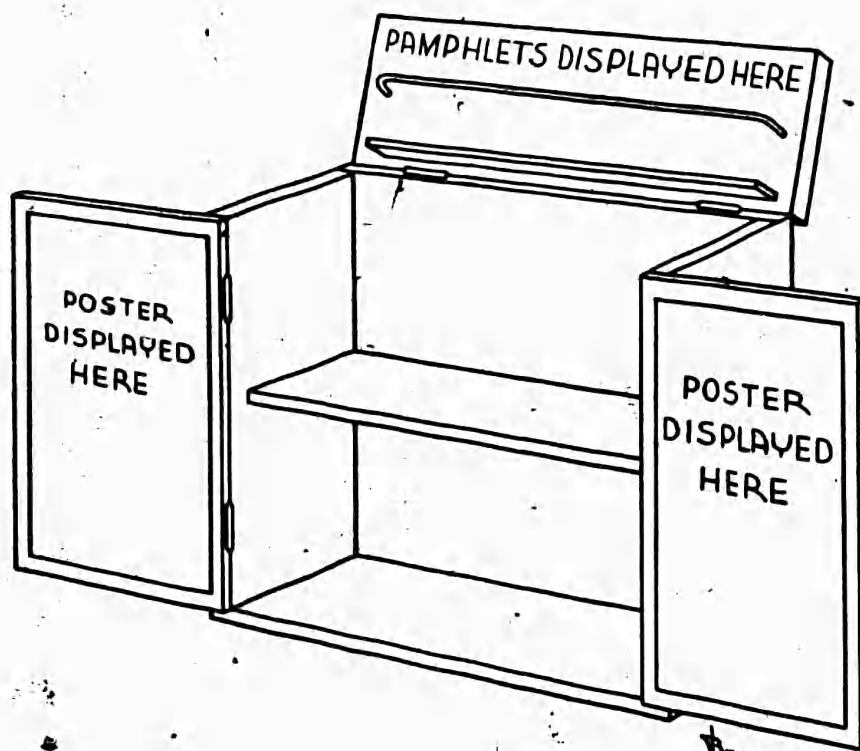
EACH LIBRARY AIDE CARRIES PASKEY TO PADLOCK

TWO HANDLES AT SIDES COME TO REST IN HORIZONTAL POSITION  
SHELF IS SLIGHTLY ABOVE CENTER TO ACCOMMODATE TALLER BOOKS ON BOTTOM



The forum library staff was urged to read for preparation; The American Way and Plain Talk. Before the meetings started, the staff prepared brief reviews of books and material certain to be used.

Much appreciative comment was received on the various exhibits held at conventions, university libraries, etc. "The more liberal members of teaching staffs and some of the school librarians are coming to feel that pamphlets are not only desirable, but becoming steadily more necessary as teaching material."



*Portable Book and Pamphlet Case Elaborated*

"The chief value in these exhibits would seem to be not in the number of orders obtained but in the provocation to reading and study which they furnish. As an instance, at the exhibit held in the Vancouver (Wash.) Library, while 15 people stolidly avoided looking at the pamphlets, one junior college boy, receiving some help and data for a term paper, was eager to know more about the forum, grateful for book lists and suggestions as to best things to buy if he 'can earn some money.' Orders are apt to follow a roused interest, but the attack should be made from the educational rather than the commercial side, and sug-

gestions as to authoritative material furnished rather than smart 'sales talk.'"

Charts and graphs displayed at meetings arouse interest in the pamphlets and books on the subject. Book lists were made carefully and attractively, and included books, pamphlets, and periodical articles. "There has been a steady call for them, and, quite hearteningly, from history and social science teachers and students and supervisors of W. P. A. and other educational projects, as well as from 'just plain people' underprivileged as to education, who 'want to find out what it's all about,' and ask to have a special book pointed out as best for a person who cannot read swiftly or extensively." "So many requests have been made for the lists on social problems that a bibliography is being furnished this month, which will be mimeographed and set up in booklet form."

Loans were made to teachers and adult education leaders outside of Portland. Heavy demands for debate material came from the high schools.

Sale of pamphlets was slow. "The readiest buyers of any whom we attempted to reach were among the delegates to the Pacific Northwest Adult Education Association at Spokane, but even they bought with some caution. Pamphlets as teaching material seemed very new to most of them, but the idea took root to some extent, and orders should come from that area later."

*Results of forum library work.—Comments:*

Young Man: "May I use your pamphlets until you have to close? They are giving me a chance to really catch up and learn things I haven't known."

Working Man: "I'm all for the forum now. I didn't suppose you would have the courage to display pamphlets on our side of these labor troubles." (Referring to pamphlets on labor's side in the maritime crisis, bound with the "Shipowners' letters.")

High-School Teacher: "The furnishing of new and stimulating material for reading and study by these youngsters is worth a large part of the cost of the forum."

Librarian at V—— City Library: "Could you arrange to come back in the fall, when schools are opening? I never dreamed you made an exhibit of such educational value."

*Recommendations.*—A special room should be set aside for the display of pamphlets, charts, and materials. Easily handled racks should be arranged against the wall, with the titles of all publications showing, and pamphlets arranged by subject. Reviews of especially valuable new publications could be made at a certain time each week. "A friendly but exceedingly well

*informed* person should be in charge to keep records of requests, assist people who want reading advice, etc., and last but not least, answer, intelligently and with good humor, questions (or complaints) in regard to our library service, purpose, and intention."

Leaders could help circulation by changing their attitudes on announcements being made. If they would make careful reference to publications in their lectures, it would have some effect on the audience. Sometimes the lectures are so long that people rush right out afterward and do not stay to look at the pamphlets. "One technique which was stimulative of interest in some of our forums was an impromptu dialogue between leader and librarian after the lecture, each giving brief reasons for reading certain books or pamphlets. Sometimes the story of the writing of a pamphlet increased circulation."

Leaders' bibliographies should contain about three to six or seven careful selections rather than three pages of mimeographed lists. Pamphlet selections should have brief annotations and suggestions as to readability.<sup>5</sup>

#### SMALLER CITY, TOWN, AND VILLAGE LIBRARIES

In the small town and village the library has an opportunity of becoming a community center for informal education even greater than that of the neighborhood branch library in the large city. It is usually small enough to have all the advantages which informality, individualized service, and intimacy with the public give to the neighborhood branch. Furthermore, it has in many instances the opportunity of being a kind of cultural outpost in the community. The small community has relatively few agencies of informal education, but it is likely to have a public library which is usually in a position to know most of the individuals and agencies with cultural and educational interests, and to act as a clearing house for such interests in the community.

Librarians can fairly well sense whether there is a potential interest in discussion of public questions in the community, and what individuals might take the initiative or form an original

<sup>5</sup> Additional information on library-forum relations may be secured by writing to the Office of Education, Public Forum Project. The reports presented here represent only a partial picture of the activities carried on in the demonstration centers.

nucleus for starting such groups. The offer of library interest, meeting rooms, or other facilities is usually a considerable inducement. Perhaps the librarian or someone on the staff or a group from the library board can themselves assume sponsorship.

There is an increasing readiness to do this. Of the 48 libraries answering the inquiry there were 21 in which forums or discussion meetings were being held, 8 using the library auditorium, 6 a smaller meeting room, and 10 a reading room after closing hours. If each branch library of large city systems, holding a forum were counted separately the total number of forums in library buildings would be increased to 35 or more. In about 15 known cases the forum was instigated by the librarian, or the librarian was one of the early organizing officers. There are probably a number more in this category that have not been reported.

The following brief descriptions or extracts from reports will serve to illustrate the range of possibilities for libraries in small cities, towns, and villages to play host to forums or discussion groups, and will suggest the varieties of procedure that can be used.

(a) MACON, GA.

The Library Forum, started several years ago by the librarian of the Washington Memorial Library, Sally M. Akin, has grown in importance and popularity so that the city appropriating body, while forced to curtail in many directions in a recent depression year, voted to allow the budget necessary to operating the forum because it considered it one of the most valuable things in the community. The attendance has averaged about 500 per meeting.

The forum meets in the reading room of the library where the library displays and lends reading material. It also distributes lists of suggested readings for both the meeting just held and the next meeting. These lists also appear in the local weekly newspaper. They are prepared by the librarian and the forum leader cooperatively. The advantage of following discussion by reading is also emphasized in the local paper. The Institute of

Citizenship of Emory University in Atlanta is supplying half of the speakers, and each of the civic clubs of the city is being represented on the program in an effort to effect closer contact and cooperation between them and the forum.

As a result of this forum, two others have been started in libraries of small southern towns—Hattiesburg, Miss., and Dublin, Ga.

(b) NORRIS, TENN.

The Community Library of Norris, a community established by the Tennessee Valley Authority at Norris Dam, like the other T. V. A. community libraries, is an important and integral part of the broad program of adult education involved in this project. The library is especially the center for informal education in the community of Norris. Until the completion of the dam and the establishment of a town-managed educational system the librarian was also the local supervisor of general adult education and recreation, partly because the library was considered the central or key unit of this informal education program.

The librarian at Norris, R. Russell Munn, was obviously in a strategic location to act as a recruiting agent for discussion groups. From among library patrons whose reading evidenced an interest in social and economic problems he gradually gathered two groups of men, of 12 to 15 each, designated as "cracker barrel clubs," which met periodically in one another's homes for informal discussion of social and political topics.

The subject for the next fortnightly meeting was decided at the conclusion of each session. The leader was usually the host and everyone had his turn. Crackers and some inexpensive drink were usually served. Frequently one evening's discussion led naturally into the next. For example, a discussion of the Supreme Court led into a consideration of its relation to T. V. A., and a statement that the American educational system was responsible for some of our troubles led them to discuss it at the next meeting.

As wide a point of view as possible was sought and not more than two men from any T. V. A. division were invited. Group

loyalty was an important factor in holding them together. This was *their* group.

A favorite procedure came to be the review of a book by one man as a starter of discussion. Twice such sessions lasted until after 11 o'clock. This was when Chase's *Government in Business* and Coyle's *Brass Tacks* were the basis of the discussions which led practically every member to read the books after the meeting.

Out of the "cracker barrel clubs" grew the Sunday Night Forum, open to all in the community. This is sponsored by the Norris Religious Fellowship (the nondenominational community church), and brings in outside speakers on social problems. The talks are followed by live discussion periods. The average attendance is about 50.

In all these activities the librarian acts as a kind of behind-the-scene executive director. This gives him the opportunity to fully utilize all opportunities to relate the discussions to reading and to bend the programs in the direction of education.

(c) HATTIESBURG, MISS.

Following is a brief description of the Open Forum of the Hattiesburg Public Library given by its librarian, Miss Clyde Smith. There are only two on the staff of the library. The library displays and lends books and magazines at the meetings, and occasionally distributes pamphlets free (e. g. on Social Security). Book lists for the forum are published in the local newspaper.

We began our Open Forum in January of this year, with the plan of having one each month on the third Thursday evening of the month, after the regular 8 p. m. closing hour of the library. That is, if the idea "took." It did. We had a very encouraging crowd present for the first one, with a larger number in attendance until we thought it necessary to move from the library auditorium to the main reading room for the last meeting in May. We disbanded for the summer months.

The forum is sponsored by the Library Board. However, from the board we have three members appointed to serve as the Forum Committee, with three members from the public. The meetings are presided over by one of the prominent business men. He is a member of the Forum Committee, having become one of the

three members from the public by his election as presiding officer at the first meeting last year. We felt that this would make the people feel that it was their forum rather than a library project. It has worked. The forum has brought out people who did not use the library.

We feel that we have possibilities here. We have two good sources from which to get speakers, the two colleges here. We also have good material in the town. We have no funds from which to bring outside speakers. That may handicap us later, but we are hoping to become so indispensable that some provision may be made for the forum in the budget, or elsewhere.

(d) DUBLIN, GA.

The informal discussion group which resulted in the Carnegie Library of Dublin, Ga., is briefly described by the librarian, Roberta Smith, as follows:

Ours was only an informal discussion group. It met monthly, on Sunday afternoon, at the library. Publicity was most willingly given by the daily newspaper.

Matters of current interest were discussed. The choice of a subject for each meeting was in the hands of a committee appointed for that especial time. The question for discussion was chosen from the list made at the first forum meeting.

The discussion was led by one of the committee for that afternoon. Someone appointed made a short talk on the subject. The meeting was then opened for general discussion, no person being supposed to take over 5 minutes of the time.

Among the questions taken up on various afternoons were: Old-age pensions, Social Security Act, Townsend plan, socialism, communism, fascism, a proposed amendment to the State constitution on taxes, which was to be voted on at the general election in November.

The attendance was never very large, but the group was always an interested one, and usually ready to take part in the informal discussion.

We hope that from this small beginning an activity of growing value to our town will develop.

(e) WAUPUN, Wis.

Another example of discussion groups started as the result of the initiative of the librarian is described by Clara L. Lindsley,

librarian of the Waupun Public Library, which also has only two members on its staff:

The Public Library Forum which I sponsor is a small informal group of a little more than average men and women of all ages and different backgrounds. It has an average attendance of about 20 and is held in a small meeting room in the library. It is advertised as open to any one interested in a free discussion of public problems.

The one thing in which all are interested is to get together every 2 weeks in an evening and discuss for 2 or 3 hours some public controversial question selected before. We are now discussing the political platforms of all the political parties.

I started this almost 2 years ago, never having heard at that time of public forums of this kind. I started it because I very much enjoy discussion of important and debatable topics and knew a few other people who did. It grew to have about 25 people most of whom usually come. I try to keep it very informal and friendly. People who say at first they wish to listen but won't talk find themselves expressing their ideas before they know it. We often have very, very heated arguments but no one so far has stayed offended. As one man said not long ago to a minister guest from New Jersey, "We are not 'yes' people but we like each other just the same." I try constantly to keep before them the idea of trying to see things from all the different angles, trying to find the truth if possible, and not being afraid of taking on some new ideas now and then.

Occasionally we have someone from outside, usually connected with the university, to talk on something we are interested in and wish to know much more about, as "cooperatives."

Sometimes a list of suggested reading material representing various points of view is posted for the next meeting. Occasionally reading material is displayed at the meeting or on a special reserve shelf in the library. Practically all the individuals in this group are very busy people and do not, or think they do not, have a great deal of time for reading. But of course they do some, and some of them a good deal. I notice that after a meeting they are apt to follow up something we have discussed.

In working constantly in a small town to get people to read our better books, magazines, and pamphlets, I come in contact with a good many people and I feel that the American Library Association is on the right track in promoting the publication of brief, simply written books or pamphlets dealing with important questions. The average run of people in this country do not have enough intellectual curiosity to struggle with long, involved dis-



cussions of things which at best are difficult to understand and complex.

Another interesting development <sup>6</sup> in Waupun is the discussion group for unemployed, out-of-school youth started by Miss Lindsley.

In my community, as in every other, there are comparatively large numbers of young people who, perhaps having attained a college degree and being unable to find work, or perhaps unable to go on to college, find themselves most decidedly at loose ends. Ambition and ideals at a high pitch; active minds and bodies with nothing or little to do. This cannot be other than disturbing to their interested friends.

Out of this state of affairs evolved the idea of some kind of a discussion club for a group of this age in order to give these young people something worth while, interesting, and stimulating to think about, and at a time when all of us need to do some serious thinking on the world's present economic and social problems.

For a starting point I asked 8 or 10 young people whom I knew to have some intellectual interests, if they wished to form some sort of discussion group. With more or less enthusiasm most of them assented. There is no formal organization but in order to have some uniformity in background the meetings are advertised as being open to any young person who is out of high school and who is interested in this kind of a thing. Obviously the attendance would be comparatively small and limited to a rather select group.

As the plan formulated in my mind it seemed wise to ask a few more mature people (not too many), both men and women, who would be intelligently and sympathetically interested in this sort of a project, to help direct the discussions.

At our first meeting we discussed plans a little further, and details as to topics for discussion, frequency of meetings, etc., I felt should be left largely with the "little intellectuals." I am keeping this strictly a public library project and the discussions are based upon original ideas and reading made easily accessible.

The meetings are held every 2 weeks and, as this has worked out at the present time, one of the members of the group outlines briefly the topic for discussion, the pros and cons, and one of the older leaders of the group directs the discussion somewhat.

One of the subjects we have discussed is "Five-" and "Ten-Year Plans" based upon readings from Chase, Beard, etc. Early in

<sup>6</sup> Lindsley, Clara L. A Little Experiment in Adult Education. Wisconsin Library Bulletin, 29: 35, February 1933.

December we battled for and against the payment of war debts and reparations. The causes for the increase in crime, especially among young people, were thoughtfully discussed at our last meeting. Our next meeting, on some aspects of education, having as a basis the provocative article in March 1932 Harpers, "Shall We Make Our Children Commonplace?" promises to be intensely interesting and is leading to a rather wide range of reading along educational lines.

Some disappointment was expressed by two or three members of the group that we felt it wise to omit one meeting on account of a public-school concert which was given for poor relief.

A thing like this, once started, and where there is interest, almost carries itself along. The important thing is to know your young people. Do not talk down to them. There are always a few boys and girls just out of high school who might enjoy this sort of thing but are too shy to allow themselves to be drawn in without discreet and subtle coaxing. When once persuaded they are your friends for life.

The thoughtful interest, idealism and intelligence that these young people show in discussion is perhaps not surprising but is most gratifying. They talk freely and frankly but no one has as yet monopolized the evening. Coming out of these meetings I feel grateful to them for what I have learned. Seldom has any library project that I have undertaken seemed so justified and worth while.

(f) NEW LONDON, N. H.

From a rural New England village we have an example of a successful public affairs forum as the result of cooperation between local educators and public librarians.<sup>7</sup>

Located in the lake region of New Hampshire, New London is a beautiful hill town 8 miles from the nearest railroad station. The permanent population of about 850 is supported by the summer tourist and residence business and by general farming, although an increasing number of persons are depending on occupations arising from the growth of Colby Junior College \* \* \*

It supports with the aid of private benefactions an excellent library employing two full-time librarians \* \* \*

Contrary to the opinions of some of the summer visitors, there

<sup>7</sup> Pitkin, Royce S. An Adventure in Adult Education. The Nation's Schools, 15: 25-28, April 1935.

is a great deal of activity in New London after the tourist season has closed. As a matter of fact the real community life is most active and varied in the cooler seasons. The grange, the lodges, the church organizations, the hospital aid association, the dramatic club, the women's club, the junior college, and the high school, all provide opportunities for people to use their talents and their time. It is not uncommon for two or three major events to be taking place the same night. Hence it cannot be said that there is nothing for the townsfolk to do. In spite of this extensive program of community activities there has been no forum for the planned discussion of social-economic problems and no adult organization that was primarily educational in nature.

Believing that a few of the adults might welcome an opportunity to study and discuss some aspects of contemporary life, Dr. J. Duane Squires, instructor in history at Colby Junior College, and I announced, through the little weekly paper, that we would offer an evening course in the problems of modern society to adults who might be interested. Upon hearing of the proposal the librarians at the Tracy Memorial Library announced their desire to join the class and volunteered the use of the conference room in the library for the meetings.

With some fear and trembling lest there should be no further response to the call and that we would be found all dressed up with no place to go, Dr. Squires and I went to the library for the first meeting in the latter part of November. Imagine our surprise at finding more than 30 persons who wanted to enroll for the course! \* \* \* As the winter progressed additions were made to the group until it included more than 40 persons. The occupational distribution is interesting. There were housewives, teachers from the public school and the junior college, laborers, librarians, farmers, a doctor, a minister, bookkeepers, business men, a contractor, a retired business man, and a surveyor. Of this number two were members of the local school board.

The course was called "An Introduction to American Civilization Today." Among the topics discussed were the characteristics of modern economic society, the influences that mold our opinions, the influence and development of machines, economic influences in American history, the place of the modern corporation, the growth of the constitution, the relation of the government to the common man, the influence of the frontier and the results of its passing, and the possibilities of a planned society. At the opening of each meeting either leader would present his views on the subject under consideration and this would be followed by animated and sometimes heated discussion by the members of the group \* \* \*

A general reading list was prepared and mimeographed at the beginning of the course and smaller lists were distributed for each subject studied. The libraries of the junior college and the high school cooperated with the public library in making up a special shelf of magazines and books for the use of the group. Books not found in any of the local libraries were obtained from the State library through the efforts of the town librarians. The enterprise was, therefore, cooperative in spirit and practice. It seemed to be a happy and profitable experience for all concerned and it demonstrated the possibility of extending the services and facilities of private and public educational institutions to the adult members of the small town.

(g) RIVERSIDE, ILL.

One of the most virile small forums of the country meets in the public library of this suburban village. The following description<sup>8</sup> is extracted from a very readable article in the Journal of Adult Education by one of the interested participants, R. E. Dooley:

Riverside is a residential village of about 7,000 inhabitants, set in the curves of the Desplaines 13 miles west southwest of Chicago's Loop. Although the rapid expansion of the metropolitan area has worked profound changes in the life of the village it is still a well-integrated unit, outstanding for its cultural interests, civic consciousness, excellent schools, and for the participation of many of its citizens in the political, industrial, and professional activities of the times. Many of us are successful, a few of us are smug, most of us vote the Republican ticket, among us the New Deal is anathema, and we believe that depressions are caused by states of mind and interference of Government in the normal business affairs of men.

We have had one weekly newspaper, no movie, and over 30 active organizations and clubs competing for the attention of the villager.

In this setting the forum was launched in the fall of 1932. From 100 to 125 of us meet once each month in the main reading room of the library and solve, during the course of a 2-hour discussion, problems of local and national scope with equal certainty, enthusiasm, and incontrovertible logic. Only residents of the community participate in the programs. (One exception has been made in 3 years.) \* \* \*

<sup>8</sup> Dooley, R. E. A Village Forum. Journal of Adult Education, 7:147-49, April 1935.

Many factors have contributed to our continuing success. Probably the most important is the village library. We meet in the main reading room of one of the most beautiful small libraries in America. A sympathetic library board and an enthusiastic, cooperative librarian have placed the resources of this library at the disposal of the forum. The physical setting is delightful. Comfortable chairs in easy semicircles around the program table, a huge globe in the offing, attractive maps, walls lined with books, a number of red leather lounging chairs, a crackling fire in the fireplace, winter outside and cheer and quiet within, and a group of intent and earnest forumites telling the world, our own very small world, how it should be run.

An attractive poster appears in the entrance to the library, and a table with a placard "Forum Books Here" is likely to greet the eye. Every book requested by the program committee has been provided.

The Riverside Community Forum has neither constitution nor bylaws nor membership roll, takes no formal action, unwinds no red tape. It attempts to be a catalyzer of ideas and offers an opportunity for the expression of as many divergent points of view as can exist in a small village of 7,000. Recently the regular meeting has been followed up by a round-table discussion entered into by a smaller group who found that the main meeting failed to exhaust their interest. Here a more intimate personal discussion takes place, participated in by several who hesitate to express their ideas before the larger group.

The forum committee is responsible for choosing subjects, selecting leaders, preparing publicity, and determining the method of presentation. It is a flexible body of shifting membership with definite ideas about the purpose of the forum and its place in the community, a keen interest in its success, and a willingness to devote several hours each month to achieve that success.

Our procedure is to carry on the prepared part of the program for about 1 hour and then pass the question to the audience for another hour of informal discussion. The method varies to fit the needs, wishes, and abilities of the participants and audience.

The result of an early questionnaire showed 48 in favor of the symposium method, 32 in favor of individual lectures followed by discussion, and 8 for debates. After 2 years the division of opinion ran 24 for symposium, 27 for panel discussion, and 24 for debate. This result probably indicates a growing tolerance and a recognition of the fact that controversial questions can be discussed sanely and profitably.

Program suggestions after 2 years indicate a demand for more

controversial and scientific subjects and a decreased interest in literature and art. The result of a recent ballot was: Contemporary controversy (political and economic), 46; science, 39; psychology and education, 36; crime and delinquency, 25; literature and art, 24. Excluding all but first choices the vote ran: Controversy, 37; psychology, 27; science, 23; delinquency, 12; literature, 12.

An examination of the subjects discussed shows that many fields of knowledge have been entered into by the forum, and it is our belief that there has been an increase in interest and in reading—and a growing willingness to listen to the other fellow.

We have, then, examples of what can be achieved in forum-library cooperation in villages and towns, rural and industrial communities, in the North and in the South, with library sponsorship (including participation by the library board) and with joint sponsorship by libraries and civic groups, and libraries and educational groups. These are merely convenient selections. This type of thing has happened in a number of localities—in Glencoe, Ill.; Lockport, Ill.; Dearborn, Mich.; Kingston, Pa.; Hasbrouck Heights, N. J.; Pine Bluff, Ark.; Cloquet, Minn.; etc.—and particularly in many localities in California. There are interesting achievements of this kind in connection with Hunterdon County Library<sup>9</sup> in New Jersey and various county libraries in California. Perhaps there are suggestive patterns in some of the foregoing illustrations that will encourage other libraries to experiment.

## OTHER LIBRARY-FORUM RELATIONSHIPS

### (a) LIBRARIES AS HOSTS FOR SMALL DISCUSSION GROUPS

One of the valuable byproducts of large educational forums is the small, informal, follow-up discussion group. Relatively few individuals can get the benefits of discussion in a very large meeting. This need for each to discuss with someone the issues highlighted in the large forum meeting is comparable to the need for follow-up reading. Both are almost necessary adjuncts if the forum is to yield its best in educational value.

<sup>9</sup> Details of this program are given on p. 87 of this study in connection with the topic "Rural Discussion Groups and Reading."

Libraries can and have played a very useful part in housing, recruiting, and fostering such groups. Their buildings frequently have small conference or reading rooms whose informal atmosphere is valuable in creating the ease which makes for free, uninhibited discussion. There would also seem to be an appropriateness and ultimately a very real advantage in associating these two prime follow-up devices of large forums—reading and small group discussion. The Civic Educational Forum of Binghamton (N. Y.) has such groups meeting in the public library, sometimes before and sometimes after the main forum meeting. Libraries are accustomed to having small discussion groups in their buildings. Twelve out of forty-eight libraries answering the inquiry state that they sponsor small informal discussion groups.

#### (b) READING GROUPS AND BOOK CLUBS

A slight variation of this is the so-called "reading group" which meets to discuss informally and perhaps to read together a particular book or group of books on a subject. This may be in connection with the forum or quite apart from it. It is quite another thing than the "book review talk" in which a librarian or someone else reviews or lectures on a book to a passive audience which enjoys little or no participation. This is small, informal group discussion in which a book—rather than a lecturer, as in the large forum—is the starter or foundation on which the discussion is built. There must be a leader to hold things together a little and keep the talk on the main track, but not a leader in the sense of a dominant outside specialist. Such groups have frequently been formed by readers' advisers in public libraries out of a group of clients holding like interests. The Milwaukee Public Library, under the direction of its Director of Adult Education, Hazel Medway, has had interesting recent experience in this work.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Medway, Hazel I. Group discussion in the Milwaukee Public Library. Wisconsin Library Bulletin, 30: 74-75, April 1934. Lenart, Elta. Discussion Groups: Opportunities for Libraries to Give the Reader a Chance to Talk About What He Reads. Adult Education and the Library, 5: 35-52, April 1930. (Gives experience of several libraries with such groups.) See also the description of the "cracker barrel clubs" in Norris, Tenn., pp. 68-69 of this study.

Another method of stimulating reading on public affairs is demonstrated by numerous book clubs composed of a small group of people, usually friends, whose interest in social problems brings them together from time to time for fireside discussions. The members of the group share their ideas on the worth-while books or pamphlets in their field of interest. The group then purchases such books and pamphlets as it would like to have in its cooperative library. Such a group may order certain pamphlets in quantities so that each member may have one. But more usually the club attempts to make available the latest but more expensive books to its members at a low cost by distributing the cost among the members. This scheme results in a group of people having a common reading experience over a year or so which contributes greatly to their discussions. Variations of this informal scheme of adult education are unlimited.

(c) THE LIBRARY AS A RECRUITING AGENCY FOR  
GROUPS AND LEADERS

The library frequently can act as an effective recruiting agency for small follow-up discussion groups attached to the large forum. The library staff, in intimate contact with individuals interested in follow-up reading, has an unusual opportunity to help in forming congenial, effective groups, since those interested in follow-up reading are apt to be also the group most interested in follow-up discussion. Furthermore, the library is a central public agency open day and evening hours, and is well suited as a place of registration for such groups. Most libraries interested in adult education maintain an information service on informal education opportunities in the community, and the public is gradually learning that the public library is a clearing house for such information.

This kind of service was given the Pittsburgh Community Forum by the readers' counselor of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh in the forum's program of aiding the formation of neighborhood follow-up discussion groups.

Another type of contributory service is given by the Denver Public Library. It offers to act as a free clearing house of advice on available leaders and speakers on various topics for local



discussion groups and study clubs. It also publicly advertises the services of a librarian to attend the meetings of any such group and talk for a few minutes about the available reading material in connection with the topic being discussed or studied by the group and to explain the library services, routines, and resources as they may relate to the special interests of the group.

#### (d) LIBRARIES AND JUNIOR FORUMS

Another important adjunct to the large community forum is special meetings or forums for young people. These are frequently in connection with social science courses in high schools, or they may be sponsored by some youth organization outside the schools.<sup>11</sup> Reading in connection with such junior forums is as important as with adult forums, and on the supposition that each younger generation is better trained and more experienced in reading we may hope for a lessening of some of the difficulties we have observed in helping adults to read on serious topics with satisfaction. Here is a special opportunity for the high-school librarian and the young people's specialists of public libraries. Out of 48 public libraries replying to the inquiry, 5 indicated they were cooperating with junior forums in some way. Since our inquiry did not reach school libraries, it is to be expected that special help is being given by many school librarians in high schools having junior forums which would swell the number considerably.

#### (e) THE BRANCH LIBRARY AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD FORUM

Some branch libraries of large city systems offer unusual possibilities as meeting places for forums. In many places the branch library is tending more and more to become a kind of neighborhood center for informal education for adults. Many modern branch library buildings have inviting auditoriums or smaller meeting rooms; some even have a stage suitable for little

<sup>11</sup> Studebaker, J. W. *The American Way*. McGraw-Hill, 1935, pp. 84-88. *Public Affairs Forums*. (U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education Bulletin, 1935, No. 17, pp. 33-39.) *Youth: Education for Those Out of School*. U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education Bulletin, 1936, No. 18-III, p. 34.

theater group presentations, and these are usually available without charge for free public educational offerings. The friendly, less hurried, and systematized atmosphere of the small neighborhood branch makes it better suited as a host for most adult education programs with their necessarily informal, individualized, flexible character than large central libraries or schools. Convenience and proximity also are important factors in sustaining the educational interests of residents of outlying sections of large cities. They will go to an evening meeting in the neighborhood but would not have sufficient interest for a return journey of a half-hour to an hour to the center of the city. The neighborhood movie, church, community house, etc., are all answers to this need and have served to deepen the habit of making the neighborhood somewhat self-sufficient. One of the special values of the Des Moines forum plan is its recognition of this tendency by providing forums in many neighborhood schoolhouses.

In many neighborhoods the branch library has come to be much more than a mere book depot. Often, as just suggested, it is something of a cultural community house, for art exhibits, musicals, dramatic performances, lectures, study club meetings, forums and a variety of informal educational offerings. The modern progressive library fosters these things partly because it considers that it holds certain informal educational obligations to its community and partly because meetings in the library building tend to expose the attendants, who presumably have aroused cultural interests, to the opportunity of follow-up reading.

The librarian of Des Moines has already been quoted as wishing to experiment with forum meetings in branch libraries to see whether they would attract adults who are reluctant to go to a school building.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the location of a Federal forum demonstration in Minneapolis, the public library of that city also experimented extensively with neighborhood forums in branch libraries.

Obviously there is no validity for a generalization that it is more advantageous to hold forums in libraries in preference to other types of building. Situations vary and local conditions only can

<sup>12</sup> See p. 52.

determine. These points of view are set down here in the belief that they may be welcome suggestions in some places and on the assumption that they may eventually lead to a closer association of reading with discussion of public questions.

The use of branch libraries in larger cities for forum discussions is not uncommon in recent years. Sometimes the library itself has been the sponsor, as in the case of the somewhat notable forum in the Muhlenberg Branch <sup>13</sup> of the New York Public Library on West Twenty-third Street. This was begun several years ago by the Peoples Institute of New York. In 1930, the institute was unable to carry it on further and the branch librarians undertook the responsibility of carrying it on with the help of a committee of interested members of the group. The large lecture meetings are held in the auditorium of the library and the smaller follow-up discussion groups in the children's reading room after hours.

In other cities the forums are sponsored and managed by various agencies but use the branch library buildings for meetings and have the cooperation of the library in supplying reading material and in other ways. Some of the meetings of the Federal forum demonstrations are held in the public library buildings. Many of the forums and discussion groups promoted and sponsored by the California Association for Adult Education <sup>14</sup> were in library buildings in various cities and towns. The cooperation of the Los Angeles Public Library in many of these has been whole hearted and complete.

Four of the branches of the Chicago Public Library have forums under varying kinds of sponsorship. One of these, the Toman Branch, is so typical of the community center aspect mentioned above and so illustrative of how incidentally these projects sometimes develop, that a few quotations from an interesting descriptive article <sup>15</sup> are in point.

<sup>13</sup> The Mind Plus Reading Plus Discussion. *Adult Education and the Library*, 3: 83-84, July 1928. See also Muhlenberg Forum, *Handbook of Adult Education in the United States*, 1936, p. 64.

<sup>14</sup> Adams, Lucy Wilcox. The Talk of the Town. *Journal of Adult Education*, 4: 60-64, January 1932.

<sup>15</sup> Hamel, Helena. A Library Forum. *Journal of Adult Education*, 8: 174-176, April 1936.

The Toman Library Forum was organized more than 4 years ago by the John Toman Branch of the Chicago Public Library. This branch is situated in a community in which Czechoslovaks predominate. The forum was the result of a brilliant art exhibition at our library, under the sponsorship of the Bohemian Arts/Club of Chicago. \* \* \* The exhibition was a great success, and we received many requests for more affairs of a similar nature. A forum was suggested by several members of the Arts Club who were of the opinion that it would maintain the interest in Czech art and culture which the exhibition had aroused. They expressed a desire for lectures in English but devoted primarily to Czech topics. Since there is no settlement house of any importance in our community, the library seemed the natural place for a venture of this kind. \* \* \*

The first year we had five on the forum committee. Later several men expressed their interest and asked to be included among the forum directors. There are now nine in the group: Two businessmen, two attorneys, the editor of the local paper, two craftsmen, and two members of the library staff. They are a well-balanced group politically, two being conservative, two radical, and three liberal. Partly because of these differences of opinion, our committee meetings are always lively, and the lectures selected are diversified. \* \* \*

At the end of the first season we distributed several hundred questionnaires in an attempt to find out what type of lecture had been preferred. We were surprised to learn that Czech subjects were not particularly popular, and that the majority wanted lectures on current economic, social, and political problems. \* \* \*

The attendance has steadily increased. The first season we averaged 85, and last year 175. \* \* \*

We have carried on the forum despite the lack of convenient facilities for it. We have no auditorium, and the story room just off the juvenile department, in which we held our first meetings, proved too small for the audiences we attracted. We therefore moved into the juvenile department itself, though that move involved the risk of disturbing readers in other parts of the library. No objection to the presence of the forum has ever been raised, however; our public has accepted it good-naturedly. For the first 2 years we had to depend on local undertakers for chairs, an arrangement that led to difficulties on more than one occasion. Now we have folding chairs of our own, our board having supplied them when they saw that the forum was to be a permanent feature. \* \* \*

Through the forum, the library, has assumed the cultural leadership of the community, and that fact alone would seem to us to prove its success and justify its continuance.

### RURAL DISCUSSION GROUPS AND READING

Since any extensive program of forums or group discussion of public questions in rural areas is relatively recent, there is little in the way of experience with reading to report. The farmers' group discussion program, begun 2 years ago under the Agricultural Adjustment Act, was interrupted somewhat by the Supreme Court's decision, and a similar program, begun in the fall of 1936, is not far enough under way to have fully revealed either the problems of tying reading to discussion or their probable solution. Such groups previously had been experimented with by the Extension Service of the College of Agriculture in Wisconsin and in a few other States, and from these places some suggestions are available.

Such experience as is to be had from these experiments in rural areas suggests that the problem differs not in kind but in degree from the problem in urban localities which has already been discussed. Again the three needs appear: (1) Publicity and education on the discussion-reading relationship; (2) greater accessibility of reading materials; and (3) more suitable reading materials. But in each instance the needs are *much* greater than in urban areas. Farmers are less in the habit of reading than urbanites. Surveys<sup>16</sup> have shown that they do much less reading of newspapers and magazines than city dwellers even though most of their reading is in these mediums. The farmer's long hours of physical labor may have a deterrent effect. All these facts are corroborated by the opinions of the State leaders in the discussion program of the United States Department of Agriculture to whom a special inquiry was addressed.

Access to reading matter in rural areas is, of course, greatly limited. Perhaps the most direct and effective supply, outside of magazines and newspapers, comes from the Federal and State agricultural extension agencies in the form of bulletins.

<sup>16</sup> Gray, Wm. S., and Munroe, Ruth. *The Reading Interests and Habits of Adults*, p. 93-102.

Library service is woefully lacking and inadequate in many large areas. Only a few States have any wide coverage of effective county library service. There are only about 260 county libraries (out of a total of 3,065 counties) in the United States. Some State library agencies serve with State-wide traveling library collections, but a number of States have either very limited service or none of this kind. There are many difficulties in the way of satisfactory book service from town or village libraries for farmers living outside village limits. Many of these small independent local library units have weak book collections, they charge fees for users outside town limits, they are open only a few days per week or hours per day, and they are not easily accessible to many ruralites even in the age of the automobile.

The difficulty of available reading material on socio-economic subjects is stressed as an obstacle by many of the State discussion leaders. There is perhaps a larger percentage of the nonreading class—the inexperienced readers for whom most of our material is too discouraging—among rural people than among urban people.

The United States Department of Agriculture has made an excellent first attack on the whole problem by its wide distribution of eight attractively printed and illustrated bulletins comprising what is known as the "Discussion Series." These very readable first presentations of eight of the most preferred topics in rural discussion groups ask the main questions and present the main points of view on various sides. They do not attempt to consummate the subject. Each of them does refer to other inexpensive pamphlets pro and con which are obtainable from various sources. Arrangements are being made to facilitate the ordering of these supplementary pamphlets.

The Wisconsin Extension Service has developed another expedient to meet the needs of these discussion groups similar to the "Discussion Series" of the United States Department of Agriculture. This consists of mimeographed compilations of brief quotations and statistical matter from magazines on various aspects of a number of broad topics which these groups are discussing.

Minnesota is developing a system of traveling collections of specially selected books for these discussion groups. These are furnished by the State Department of Education. The leaders of the program in Ohio are cooperating with local libraries and the State lending library in the hope that the latter can supply some of the supplementary reading material suggested in the United States Department of Agriculture's Discussion Series.

Arrangements are also under way to try to bring together the 40-odd State discussion leaders and the heads of State library agencies so that they, in turn, can bring together the local discussion leaders and local libraries with the object of having as many libraries as possible make their books on the topics of discussion easily available to the groups. In general, the link between libraries and agricultural extension work has been weak. While there has been noteworthy cooperation in some States, each group as a whole needs to know more of the activities and reading facilities of the other.

Agricultural Extension is one of the most far-reaching and perhaps practically effective of all adult education programs. With the exceptions mentioned, reading in connection with these programs has been limited largely to the bulletin distribution service of the program itself. Books and other materials that libraries supply need to be worked into all such rural programs. The chief difficulty, of course, is the lack of rural library resources. With the increase in county and regional library service these things will become possible.

On first thought it may seem that there are inherent difficulties in the rural situation which tend to prevent reading from taking root. Physical labor is supposed to be incompatible with reading and study. Distance and the lack of urbanization may be thought to be obstacles. Actually the rural situation contains certain advantages which have not been fully utilized by librarians at least. While the total working hours on the farm may exceed those of the city at certain periods of the year, yet there are other periods which provide time for reading and other interests. More important is the greater freedom from interruption and distraction that the rural and village resident

enjoys. He has more of the mental leisure which the thoughtful reader and student requires.

There is another advantage which counteracts the seeming disadvantage of distance. That is the opportunity for personalized, individual contact. People may be fewer and farther apart but these facts obviate much of the necessity of dealing with them in groups and by mass handling methods. Doubtless much of the success and deep root of adult education through the Agricultural Extension Service is traceable to the scheme of informal personal visitation by county agents. Very likely interest in reading and discussing economic and social problems must be cultivated by methods similar to those which developed interest in agricultural science among farmers. The method of individualized contact is slow but effective and permanent. We have one fine illustration of this method applied to reading and discussion.

The Hunterdon County (N. J.) Library is distinctly a rural-service library. It has headquarters in the county courthouse, but its activity does not center there. Like most county libraries it is a library which goes to the people. It maintains 160 centers or book stations in schools, farmhouses, grange halls, and country stores throughout the county, each in charge of a local volunteer custodian. Its book van travels the county roads 5 days a week, usually in charge of the head librarian herself, Elizabeth T. Turner, exchanging books at the stations and lending directly to people at the roadside. In the organization and control of the library, in its book selection policy, and in other ways the principle of democratic control is operative. This is the people's own library.

In 1933, in furtherance of this policy, the County Library Commission (the governing body) and the librarian invited representatives of county agencies, custodians, interested readers, and members of the local library committees to gather to discuss what the library should do to improve and extend service. Out of this grew the Hunterdon County Library Association, composed not of librarians, nor custodians only, but of library users mainly, interested in the library as a social service institution. Thus we see a kind of voluntary, automatic selection out



of the county's citizenry of people interested in reading and the ideas that reading furnishes, a like-minded group which readily develops a fraternal feeling in which the unconscious bond is a common interest in learning through reading. Here is a perfect soil for the discussion groups which started in Hunterdon County as book discussions, but which promptly gravitated to talk not about books themselves so much as the ideas conveyed in books.

This is one of the most thriving and healthy discussion projects yet reported. It grew and developed in a natural environment and with little forcing. Its frequent meetings are largely unplanned and very informal. The group is varied in background and occupation. The librarian acts as discussion leader but the group chooses the books which it uses as "starters" of a discussion (much after the manner of the Norris, Tenn., "cracker barrel clubs") which traverses many other books and topics before it closes. It is interesting to see in the charts of the course these discussions take (as prepared afterward by Miss Turner) how prone they are to come back to interpretations of the social and philosophic problems which these people meet in their own everyday lives. They have ranged through international and domestic politics, social problems, psychology, Chinese and Greek philosophy, but always the bench mark of the local and individual life is the basis of their reckoning. This is as it should be, and perhaps as it would not be if these people were merely privately imbibing Plato, Lin Yutang, Stuart Chase, Sinclair Lewis, and others with no chance to discuss these ideas with their own neighbors.

This Hunterdon County development illustrates several things for us. Its power to sustain the interest of its participants inheres partly, at least, in the thoroughgoing democratic policies which have guided its formation and its progress. It is not handed down. These discussing farmers travel through books which scholars have robed in austerity without the least self-consciousness or timidity because they are in a friendly democratic, neighborhood group of their own.

It illustrates, as do several other cases cited previously, that books can serve instead of lecturers in the small community or

group as starters of discussion, as exhibits of discussable ideas for group examination.

It illustrates, as at Norris, Tenn., Waupun, Wis., and other places, the need of a kind of coordinator, or agent who gets the thinking, reading citizens together, provides the facilities, perhaps gives a little initial push and direction, and then steps aside into the role of a servant or executive secretary. Certainly the librarian in the small or rural community is in an unusually favorable position to serve as an agent of this kind.

Finally, and perhaps most important, is the illustration that the rural librarian, like the rural county agent, has an unusually rare opportunity to do this kind of thing because he gets his first introduction to the individuals who make up the community in his house to house and village to village visitation where people can be met in their overalls; on their own familiar grounds, and where conversation on books and the ideas in books can take place naturally and informally, and without the inhibitions created by desks, counters, and marble columns. Hunterdon County farmers had had the library book van and the librarian and her books on these familiar terms for 5 years before they were invited to join a County Library Association. They responded because they knew and trusted the agency and the person representing it.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

IN RECENT years the forum has become significant as a means of informal civic education for adults. This educational emphasis has brought with it various changes in method and certain added features, prominent among which is an emphasis on reading and study as a supplement to discussion. But though the mutually auxiliary relation of reading and discussion is apparent, the development is too new to have achieved any wide acceptance and use of the principle. An examination of the current practices in forums throughout the country reveals that a relatively small amount of reading in connection with the topics of discussion is carried on even in those forums where some emphasis and opportunity for reading have been given. Such experiences have led to the assumption in some quarters that forum attendants as a class are either disinterested or are poor or inexperienced readers. This may be partly true. However, they do not mean that forum-goers cannot become interested readers. They rather show that we have not been especially successful in getting them to read the particular things that have been offered them.

If, then, reading is to play the effective part it seems capable of playing in making public forums a really vital force in civic education, an attack on the problem in three directions seems indicated after an examination of the successes and failures of various forums in trying to promote reading. First, there must be a definite program of publicity and education to demonstrate to forum attendants the values of reading in connection with discussion of public questions. Secondly, reading materials must be made more accessible than they now are. Lastly, a much more suitable type of reading material must be provided.

1. *Education and publicity.*—The great group of the nonreading adult public which makes up a large section of forum audiences needs (1) to be made aware of the reading opportunity, and (2) to have removed its fear that the libraries and other sources of reading material are too complicated for them to learn to use.

The forum leader is in the most favorable position to direct attention to reading. Next in importance is the presence at the meeting of an experienced librarian who knows the subject matter and can personally recommend and lend books. Newspaper publicity through articles by forum leaders or librarians, or interviews with them, stressing the reading opportunity, rather than merely listing books, is helpful. Reading lists distributed at the meetings are useful as auxiliaries to these other methods of personal recommendation but are not by themselves adequate stimulators of interest. Their value is increased if they are annotated from the point of view of the reader and what he wants to know about the books; if some indication of the relative difficulty, length, and popularity of each book or pamphlet is given, if they carry a prominent invitation to ask a librarian or a forum leader for further advice and personal suggestions; and if they are attractive in format. Reading lists should be prepared cooperatively by leaders and librarians and should ask for the reader's comment on whether he found satisfaction in any of the readings suggested.

2. *Accessibility.*—The educational and professional worlds are slow to recognize a principle that businessmen know—that easy availability is essential in introducing a new product. Experience in distribution of reading material to forum patrons indicates that having books and pamphlets available in the same building in which the forum is held is not enough. They must be in the meeting room or near the exit and available with a minimum of borrowing routine and restrictions. Pamphlets can be provided in greater quantity than books because they are cheaper and can be lent with less care and routine, and because their loss is of less consequence. Patrons frequently prefer buying pamphlets to borrowing them. The special display in libraries of books on forum subjects is of some value, but its use is mostly by regular library patrons. The reading interest of nonreaders and those who are not regular library patrons is seldom strong enough to carry over until they have the opportunity to visit the library and run down some recommended book.

A supply of duplicate copies of popular books or pamphlets equal to or larger than the demand is, of course, important.

Frequently library budgets are insufficient to provide the necessary supply of duplicates. Furthermore, the short-lived demand for many duplicates on certain subjects makes their purchase by the library uneconomical. Experience points that a relatively small auxiliary provision for reading materials in the forum budget helps materially this situation and enables a much wider circulation of books and pamphlets.

Pamphlets seem, in many respects, more popular and more suited to use by public affairs forums than books. But the available supply of satisfactory pamphlets is seriously limited by an inadequate production, due largely to a lack of distribution facilities. Low-priced pamphlets cannot be distributed through the usual book marketing channels without a subsidy. Distribution on a quantity basis rather than a single copy basis seems essential to solve the problem. This, in turn, is dependent on creation of a large public market for them among people interested in forums and other civic education enterprises. Such projects seem to have an opportunity here to create this needed popular interest in pamphlets and perhaps to supply a required link in the chain of distribution—buying in quantity and reselling to their own patrons who presumably are a selected interest group.

3. *Suitability of the reading material.*—Evidence has been accumulating for more than a decade that there is a great dearth of reading material on serious subjects which can be read with any degree of understanding or satisfaction by a very large section of the adult public who are potential readers. This evidence comes through the experiences of readers' advisers and other librarians, forum leaders, C. C. C. camp educational advisers, parent education specialists, and other adult education workers, and is verified by recent researches into the readability of books and other forms of printed matter by William S. Gray and others at the University of Chicago. The provision of an adequate supply of "readable" material is obviously the most important of the three major problems. Both promotion of wider interest in reading and making reading matter more easily available are dependent upon having suitable books and pamphlets to distribute and recommend.

The need for readable material in the social sciences is especially

marked. The researches of Gray and others indicate that most social science material—pamphlets, and magazines and newspaper articles in these fields, as well as books—rate either “difficult” or “very difficult” in phraseology, vocabulary, etc., and probably also in concepts.

Fortunately, some first attacks on the problem are being made. There have been a few fairly successful attempts to produce readable material in the social sciences in the pamphlet field and to a lesser extent in the periodical field. A “readability laboratory” to analyze, rewrite, and produce understandable manuscripts in serious subjects on an experimental basis has been created in a large university, and promising cooperative relationships with interested publishing houses have been established.

*Other cooperation between libraries and forums.*—Beside cooperation in the provision of supplementary reading matter for forum attendants, there are examples from many parts of the country and many different sized communities of the advantages accruing from a joining of the resources of these two informal adult education agencies—forums and libraries. Libraries of varying kinds and sizes have been hosts to varying kinds and sizes of forums and discussion groups. Some of the neighborhood meetings of large city-wide demonstration forums, such as those at Des Moines and in some Federal Forum Project Centers, have been held in library buildings. The meeting rooms of libraries have accommodated the small, follow-up discussion groups connected with large forums. The adult education departments of some city libraries have acted as recruiting agencies in the formation of such small discussion groups and also as information bureaus to help groups secure available local leaders, lecturers, and library representatives at meetings. Many libraries have sponsored “reading groups,” either in connection with forums or independently, which meet in small informal groups to read and discuss books and current topics treated in specific books.

A fair proportion of librarians recognize that discussion is as essential a supplement to reading as reading is to discussion, and we see them recruiting and leading discussion groups and forums themselves, as well as joining with local educators, civic groups, and other organizations in the sponsorship of forums or discussion

groups. Such meetings are usually held in the library auditorium, in small meeting or conference rooms in the library, or in a reading room, usually after closing hours or on Sundays.

The use of branch library buildings in large cities or community libraries in small towns and villages is especially noteworthy. There is an increasingly evident trend for such small library units to become centers of a variety of informal education and cultural interests in outlying city neighborhoods and in small communities. The simpler routine, the lack of crowds and hurrying, the informal and friendly atmosphere of such library units, make them more and more favored as locations for forums, study clubs, musicales, lectures, exhibits, etc. In the small town and village their opportunity to act as a general-cultural outpost in fostering such opportunities is increasingly important.

Unfortunately, library resources and reading material distribution in rural areas to supplement the recent developments of discussion groups on economic problems among farmers are relatively weak in many areas. The United States Department of Agriculture and the State Agricultural Extension Departments promoting these rural discussion groups have been unusually prompt in giving thought to the need of reading material in connection with them and are developing their bulletin and pamphlet service to meet the special needs of the discussion problem. Cooperative action between the agricultural extension agencies and library agencies in the areas concerned has begun also. The problems of lack of interest and awareness of reading, inaccessibility, and lack of suitable materials are repeated in the rural areas with greater intensity and less progress toward a solution because they have begun much more recently than in urban centers.

In the next few years it seems probable that a consciousness of the value of reading as an important supplementary aid to discussion will spread rapidly, and that forums may give a strong impetus to the movement to effectively provide social science reading materials which will be both understandable and interesting to a large section of the population who now read little or nothing on such things.

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