

NORTHCENTRAL FIELD OFFICE, IOWA STATE TRAVELING LIBRARY  
MASON CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY

EVALUATION OF LIBRARY SERVICE IN THE LAURENS PUBLIC LIBRARY

On January 26, 1964, Northcentral Field Consultant, Mrs. Ray Smith, held a morning conference with Mrs. Lulu Cook, Librarian of the Laurens Public Library, to evaluate library procedures, working conditions and service program of the library. This report will assess the findings and point out possible improvements.

PERSONNEL

Present staff:

1. Mrs. Lulu Cook, Librarian - Employed 26½ hours a week at an annual salary of \$1380. She has 2 weeks paid vacation and 6 days sick leave per year - not cumulative. Librarian is required to be at the library during all opening hours and works every evening by herself.

Education and experience: High School Degree and four summer workshops in library work at the State University of Iowa.

2. Mrs. Anna Bartley - Employed 5½ hours a week at an hourly rate of \$1.00. She has no paid vacation and no sick leave.

Education and experience: Some college study.

3. Mrs. Theone Harris - Employed 13 hours a week at the hourly rate of \$1.00. She receives neither sick benefits nor vacation pay.

4. Mrs. Betty June Von Horsen - Employed for a minimum of 2 hours a month.

Staff duties:

Librarian: Daily

1. Check mail
2. Send necessary library correspondence
3. Balances petty cash funds and records it
4. Checks registrations
5. Attends circulation desk for 21 hours a week including all evening hours, Monday through Saturday.
6. Reference work
7. Directs assistants
8. Supervises students so that they will not disturb other library patrons
9. Helps mark new books and paste book pockets
10. Alphabetizes circulation cards
11. Makes out daily circulation records
12. Checks on filing
13. Keeps record of reference questions

Weekly

1. Makes out overdue notices
2. Takes cards from files for withdrawn books
3. Consults book reviews and publishers information for possible book purchases (adult non-fiction, juvenile and young people's titles). Adult fiction is selected by a board member.
4. Classifies and gives subject headings to non-fiction books
5. Prepares catalog cards

Monthly

1. Makes out book orders
2. Writes recommendations and reports to be presented at board meetings. The librarian does not attend these meetings.
3. Makes out total monthly circulation reports
4. Weeds and withdraws books
5. Reads shelves
6. Makes out record of books processed

Annual

1. Report to State Traveling Library
2. Report to library board

Mrs. Anna Bartley

1. Desk duty in adult department for 5½ hours each week
2. Marks accession numbers in book
3. Pastes pockets in books
4. Files cards in catalog
5. Letters the book's spine
6. Helps to mark books on reading lists
7. Helps to alphabetize circulation

Mrs. Theone Harris

1. Desk duty in the children's department for the 13 hours that it is open
2. Cleans the library (15 minutes a day)
3. Assists with the mending
4. Types book cards and pockets

Mrs. Betty June Von Horsen

1. Helps Mrs. Runneberg in bookkeeping routines
2. Occasionally helps in typing at the library
3. Has worked in the children's department on a relief basis

At present all business procedures, including the receiving and checking in of new books, are performed by Mrs. Runneberg.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

For the extent of the Laurens' library operation, the library does not employ adequate help. The combined hours of the four present staff members equals little more than 1 full-time person (45 hours). The equivalent of two full-time staff members should be provided. If Mrs. Cook could be employed on a full-time basis she would be able to centralize business procedures and book selection. At the present time, Mrs. Cook does not have adequate time to publicize the library's holdings outside of the library, nor does she have time to supervise displays, booklists, or help clubs in their programming.

Since the librarian is playing such an important educational part in the community and also has the added administrative duties of a small busi-

ness, she should be given the consideration (with regard to salary and fringe benefits) that others in Laurens with comparable background and responsibilities enjoy. It is the recommended practice in other towns to associate the librarian's salary and working conditions with the local school system. Although the school librarian must have educational qualifications which are not necessarily held by the public librarian, keep in mind that she also does not have the administrative responsibility that a public librarian has. It must also be remembered that this is paid for 9-9½ months of work with all legal holidays and an extra vacation at Christmas. Yet, I understand that the minimum starting pay for a teacher with just two years of college is \$3650. It would hardly seem fair to set a minimum salary for the public librarian at less than \$4000.

1. It is recommended that sick leave for all employees total 1½ days a month cumulative to 90 days. It is further recommended that the head librarian be allowed 4 weeks of vacation and that her staff be allowed 2 weeks. These policies are standard in all up-to-date libraries.

2. A Personnel Committee should be appointed to study the salaries and working conditions of all members of the library staff. The committee should re-consider the practice of requiring the librarian to work every evening with no full days off. Attendance at summer workshops or refresher courses at library school is often provided for by library boards to the advantage of the total library's operation.

3. The head librarian should be in full charge of all of her assisting staff. Any other arrangement places an unnecessary burden on the board and will weaken staff efficiency and morale. The board is responsible for appointing a head librarian who is in turn responsible for hiring and directing the activities and schedules of all other employees. While the board in consultation with the librarian sets salary schedules, hours of service, and general conditions of employment, the librarian alone is responsible for the total performance of the staff. To achieve the best results the probation time of all employees should be enforced and the total record of the employee must be reviewed at this time. Slipshod or inaccurate work should not be tolerated.

### LIBRARY PROCEDURES

#### Selecting and ordering books

Mrs. Cook selects adult non-fiction, juvenile and young people's titles, while Mrs. Runneberg selects adult fiction. Selection tools used are Book List, New York Times, and Book Review Digest. Books are ordered from McClurg's and ISEA. Replacements in juvenile titles are ordered pre-bound from New Method. New children's books are not ordered pre-bound. The library also has subscriptions with the Junior Literary Guild and Arcadia publishers.

#### Cataloging and processing

Books arrive at the library and at the home of Mrs. Runneberg. Mrs. Runneberg checks in the books and brings them to the library. Mrs. Cook does original cataloging and classification for each book (she does not take Wilson or Library of Congress printed cards which provide this information). She then types the catalog

cards, book pockets, and book cards. Mrs. Bartley helps to paste pockets in the books and mark the spines. She also files the catalog cards.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Selecting the books is the main job of the librarian. From her daily contact with library patrons and her constant observation of the community's cultural life she must identify the present and potential intellectual needs of the people and try to meet them with new and older basic titles. This process requires an intimate knowledge not only of the present book and non-book collection but also of the demands of present patrons. It is also the responsibility of the librarian to provide her community with the best works of all significant writers. Any attempts by self-appointed censors to interfere with her selection should be firmly resisted and backed with a written book-selection policy by the board.

\* 1. Library Journal and Horn Book should be added to book selection tools available to Mrs. Cook.

2. A committee on the board should be concerned with drawing up a book selection policy which includes an endorsement of the "Freedom to Read" statement and an assessment of book budget needs. (See part IV of Supplement A to Small Libraries Project Pamphlet #2 - Suggested policies for public libraries").

3. Multiple order forms could be used. One copy used for the actual book order, one copy sent for catalog cards and another copy saved for library files.

\* 4. Wilson cards should be ordered for all titles.

\* 5. Library of Congress cards should be obtained where Wilson cards are not available.

6. Date due slips could be replaced by pre-dated book cards. (Demco catalog p. 33).

7. Pre-bound editions should be ordered for all children's books.

8. When jackets are left on a book they should be protected with a plasti-kleer jacket (Demco Company-Champion brand ranges from 7½¢-9¢ for the average-sized cover). This plastic jacket will more than make up for its cost in making the book more attractive and will help preserve the book's condition.

9. If possible, a special grant should be requested in this year's budget to build the children's collection. This would include rebinding as well as the purchase of older basic titles and new books to fill in the subject collection.

\* 10. A new typewriter with card platen is needed.

\* 11. An adding machine would also be a valuable time-saver for the librarian's office.

12. The adult non-fiction and reference sections need up-dating and amplifying.

13. New signs and labels are needed for the shelves.

Registration and circulation

New registrations are recorded in both a book and card file. This card is also used as a pay record for rural users.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. At present there is a double record of registrations. The book could be eliminated.
2. If different-colored registration cards were used for rural borrowers there would be a closer check on expired cards.
3. At present the book cards are arranged alphabetically in the circulation file. If these cards were placed under the date the books are due, it would facilitate the location of over-due books and would make the book card easier to find when the book is returned.
4. Date due slips could be replaced by pre-dated book cards (Demco catalog p. 33).

Rural borrowers

There is presently a non-resident fee of \$1.50 per family. There is no cooperation with other libraries in the county or reciprocal borrowing privileges.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The most satisfactory solution would lie in levying a county library levy. This would enable all rural residents to borrow at any library in the county. Some provision could even be made to allow free borrowing throughout the county. This would enable the libraries to make the most economical use of book resources in the area.  
~~X~~ A grant of \$5000 may still be available to Pocahontas county libraries from State Library if a county levy is passed.

CONCLUSION

The Laurens Library has been fortunate in having such a serious and devoted librarian as well as a progressive board. I believe that if the respective duties and responsibilities of board and librarian were clarified, there would be a more effective use of each person's capabilities. Let me make a brief summary of this possible division of duties:

Library board: Select and employ a competent librarian; determine a written policy for the library's operation and program; Secure adequate funds; Keep abreast of the standards and library trends; Establish and support a public relations program; Attend all board meetings, regional and state meetings and workshops; Be aware of library development in the area; Report regularly to the governing officials and the general public.

Librarian: Act as technical advisor to the board, recommend needed policies; Hire all personnel and supervise their work; Carry out the policies of the library as adopted by the board; Suggest and carry out plans for extending the library's services; Prepare regular reports; Maintain an active program of public relations; Prepare an annual budget in consultation with the board; Select and order all books and other library materials; Attend all board meetings other than those in which his own salary is under discussion, may serve as secretary of the board; Attend all professional meetings and workshops; Report regularly to the library board, officials of local government, and to the general public.