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THE LIBRARY LOOKS BACK AND FORWARD

Forty years ago on the 16th of December the Public Library of Minneapolis opened its doors for the first time to the community which it was to serve. Our minds go back through the changes that have taken place. Two remarkable men have served as librarians. The one who organized ^{the library} and, with a far look ahead, planned its policy, was Mr. Herbert Putnam, who now stands at the head of his profession as the Librarian of the National Library. The other was the late Dr. James K. Hosmer, historian and poet, whose wide knowledge of books built up a splendid collection. ~~ef-books~~.

When the library opened there was but one building; now there are 21 branch libraries, with library service in hospitals, business houses, schools, and county stations,-- a great system radiating throughout the city and county and reaching thousands of homes through the 164,000 borrowers. A great circulation of books has been the result and a fine personal service, of which we are justly proud.

But size is not the only measure of usefulness, and perhaps this anniversary is a good time to think of more intensive growth. We are entering another phase of library service and are asking ourselves if, with all the large circulation of books, public taste, quality of reading and public thinking have risen proportionately. We are a little skeptical, and are wondering if we should not chance the falling off of our proud statistics in the interest of quality rather than quantity. Is it not the function of the library to promote good reading rather than to yield to a demand unscrupulously stimulated by skillful advertising.

When there is so much need for clear thinking, for thoughtful consideration of public problems, and for those visions without which the people

perish, should libraries not improve their chance of creating new standards of appreciation for the best output of the book presses.

Perhaps to no other group as to the one which reads this Bulletin can we say so frankly that the library of the near future may cease to be a purveyor of best sellers, but, in the interests of new and better standards, may dare to be indifferent to mass reading and may give more skillful and expert service to individual needs.

Reed vs Woman - Canto

Feb 1932

①

Wm. Mans. Duf

It was with more than passing interest that I noticed in last Sunday's paper in the "25 years ago" column, that the library had that year issued 600,000 books for home circulation. It was a proud record, this year we have charged out over our desks 3622000 issues of books, more than three million increase. During those

twenty five years, the population has not doubled, but the use of the library has increased six times. Just in the past two years the increase has been almost a half million.

Last summer in spite of terrible heat and much curtailed

(2) hours of service, the increase keeps right on. This past November was the largest in the history of the library reaching a total circulation for the one month of 384,529 volumes.

It is with no boastfulness that we watch this rising barometer but with a great sense of responsibility. Apparently business at the library is going to be increasingly greater in these times of depression than ever before. And in a different way.

Librarians everywhere are asking themselves, how shall our libraries best contribute to the public good in these discouraging times. We are apparently facing a changing world. What are going to be the solutions. Are the solutions

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to be evolutionary or revolutionary.

So then leadership, is there a thinking American facing today's problems, what agency is going to help them to think.

Librarians in whom more never under greater responsibility than at present, to provide the opportunity.

This last fall the American Library Association, the Bookellers Assn and the Publishers Assn agreed to cooperate, though acting independently, on a movement to make books and magazines contribute to the understanding and solution of the problems of the depression. So these organizations have agreed upon the week of

④ January 17 in which to focus
attention and to stimulate the
widest possible interest in
reading about all aspects of
national and international affairs.
Some of the subjects suggested
American Industrial organization
Unemployment Insurance
Previous crises
America in Agriculture
Wool Trade
Reparations and war debts
Money and banking
Taxation.
Disarmament
And many others.

The American Library Assn has
prepared a fine book list called
"For Thinking America" which goes

⑤

out to all the public houses and
public libraries where the people
need to think and to think clearly.
As much as the people in cities

And so the library is alone to
the need for gathering the latest
and soundest information on timely
subjects and to the pressing need
of calling their good material to
the attention of the community.

No other agency is equipped to
play the part which the library
is equipped to play in spreading
the best thoughts of our best men
intelligent thinkers before our people.

~~Even libraries is challenged by the
great struggle which is
for a contribution which libraries must
make toward the settlement of momentous
issues. And because the meeting of these
new ideas which must arise out
of present~~

(6)
Every library is challenged
by the great struggle going
on throughout the whole
world. Every library as far as
it is able steps forward to
make the precious contribution
toward the settlement of momentous
issues and toward preparing
for the new era which must arise.

So our own library is studying
the best new publications, lifting the old
ones for duplication, placing before
our people the best that can be obtained.
Our people are reading and studying
with a seriousness which we have
never seen before.

Our people meet other more
immediate needs. There are
the men and women harassed

① By decreasing incomes all the
year of the future. Whether
they are educated or uneducated
they are struggling with restlessness
and with the new complexities so
suddenly thrust upon them.

Books are a refuge in two
ways, as a solace and a means
of forgetfulness. ~~But more particularly~~
and our patrons
are turning to ~~keep~~ books to
maintain their own morale.

But more particularly Books offer
for most people the only
free re-education.

Dean William T Russell of
Teachers College has pointed out
that whereas in the past the
man out of a job comes turn
to the western frontier for opportunity

⑧ He must now depend upon
the development of the frontier
within himself, on a re-education
of himself to meet situations.

Technical room.

Studying Room Trade & Home
Manufacturing

Men and women are uncertain
as to whether their present
Qualifications will enable them
to hold their jobs. They know
Realize that even to continue
doing their work, educational
advances are necessary. If
not employed they know that
when better times come there
will be stiffer and more
intelligent competition for all jobs.
And their vocational equipment
must be improved. Here too

⑨ is the library opportunity.
As the first people are
coming increasingly for vocational
help -

Technical room

Studying Trades, engineering,
building trades, chemistry and
chemical technology
electricity in all its applications

Machinery, repairing

Furniture and repairing

X Agriculture and service
truck gardening and

Poultry

Metal trades

Women coming in for Household
budgets, for nutrition

(College girls studying on
Cooking, Sewing &c)

Home crafts + Home repairing

(Home manufacturing gaudy
Polish, pickles, cosmetics

Over 100 people who hope
to produce + sell
something which can easily move.

Cincinnati put out some
such slogans as these

Use your spare time

Keep your mind occupied and

your hands busy

Increase your chances of getting
a job

Learn all you can about your
job

Improve your skill.

Readers Advisory work } What it is
Young Women wanting Courses
in English Art How to Enlarge
their vocabularies - for
Stenographic work. Even
men in business taking these
Courses.

Young men wanting auctioneers
course
(Young farmers wanting to
see farm equipment)
Now taking public speaking.

Women wanting Courses on
World History (only a High School
graduate)

Many people taking Courses in
Economics.

Many in psychology & Sciences.
Astronomy & new Sciences
like Jeans & Milliken
Never in -

Directors of all vocational agencies
Classes & Schools
~~Spine to~~

(11)

So that the library becomes
leading men and women
to do serious thinking on
Public problems, is doing more
immediate work for showing
the path of vocational self
guidance, and furnishing the
books and the personal advice
for those seeking re-education.

But it is a great Community
asset, in furnishing recreation.
Even if we discount completely
its educational value, ~~etc~~ it is
worth all it cost in the relief
it brings to people's minds.

Men need more relief than that
of bread and butter and lodging.
They seek at least temporary relief

from the harassing and discouraging
 realities of life. What so fine
 to bury oneself in as a good
 detection story or western yarn.
 One of our assistants said the
 other day that buying detection
 stories to fill the demand was
 like trying to fill a bottomless
 well. Romance and fiction

take the place of other recreation
 which many people find are lost
 to them, and this perhaps accounts
 for a goodly part of our increased

patronage. And we owe it to
 our people to do just this
 kind of relief work, especially
 for people who have just

decommissioned the library in their
 time of need. One old colored
 woman said "Could
 you tell me if you have a book that

(13) Company - Keeping to facts that worried
That other class, whose
time is all unoccupied,
whose jobs are gone
they are the ones who are
filling up our reading rooms.
Obviously libraries are
offering a warm place to
many a drifter who goes
through the motions of reading
for the sake of a place to
sit out the season of shelter.
Shall we refuse this form of
relief, should there not be
large warm rooms furnished
by the city for such drifters. It
would certainly be a fair way to
spend relief money. But who
shall say that it is not a legitimate
use of a community tax supported

(14) Institution like the library -
- Sewn Corner, room -
encouraging
Community recreation
in our rooms.
Story telling for children

In a number of places, we
have writing desks, and see
paper + envelopes + stamps.
It is not so easy for a poor
devotee to find them in a
cheap lodging house.

Now our relief work must also
reach outside, through various
agencies, to men who would
never come near us, either through
lack of knowledge or through pride.
City Mission + Farm
Cheap Hotels
Salvation Army rooms
- Girls lodging house -

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For all of these we are rapidly depleting our stock of duplicates. Many magazines are coming in but we need more books - books for men books for young women and we want to put in strong plea for books that they will read. This is just as much of an emergency as war times. Morale must be kept up just as much. Despair is harder to fight off now and life is much more hopeless than then when a great object held a stimulus. Hope and courage must be kept up. There are now more millions in the ranks of the unemployed than ever enlisted in the service of the world war, although

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Unfortunately there are not
more millions to finance
the increased needs.

For besides this net of outside
agencies for reading matter, the
regular channels of our own
big relief work must proceed.
People in hospitals must be
served, our business houses
libraries, telephone exchanges, fire
engine houses, street car houses
homes for children and aged,
must still be taken care
The Business Board must
keep the business man who is
sinking through deep waters, supplied
with all necessary public and
financial information. Our
Ordnance workers need the latest
experiments and the best advice

which appears on print -

Everywhere the library gives the
 call to keep - I quote - from
 "The Observer" of the Pittsburgh-L
 "Impartance Observers say that
 with the exception of those agencies
 giving actual relief, the public
 libraries of the U.S. are perhaps
 our most important institutions
 during times of business depression
 and enforced leisure."

But I must come to an
 anti climax. In spite of this
 increase in quantity and the increase
 of intensity in work, leisure everywhere
 has suffered severe cuts.

We are studying our budget for
 next year, book budgets must be
 cut heavily, when we have more
 more in need of books. The man
 and tear brings them sooner to the
 discard. We must cut less and

(18)

lights and repairs, we must cut
janitorial fees, but more of all
we must cut the ~~professional~~
~~fees~~ ~~service~~ library service
budget. These cuts all mean
shortened hours of service.
We are trying to plan full schedules
for the winter, keeping everything
open to the capacity during these
months when need, our reading
rooms most, when intellectual
activities are at the peak. Then
we will have to make it up by
short hours in summer, by longer
compulsory vacations for our
assistants, or possibly by complete
closing for a week or so in August
when weather is warm and all reading
is at its lowest ebb.

~~We are not leaving~~

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We are not letting ourselves look
at that discouraging fact, the work
ahead is too absorbing and too
necessary. When we come to
the ~~next~~ summer time and some
Archie Darrings, Mr. Keiser and
Johnnie will stand by us and will
agree that if we have the
money to do everything, it were
best to give full value when the
time of need is greatest.