



Gratia A. Countryman and Family Papers.

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PUBLICITY

[and PTA.
May, 1932]

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April
1932

In times like these no one needs to draw any picture of the financial and physical distress everywhere. The reality is too close to us; none of us has escaped it. Relief agencies everywhere are trying to relieve the basic needs of food and shelter. There are other needs quite as basic. The mental depression which we see everywhere is just as real and just as disastrous to our future as the physical deterioration. The need ~~for~~ support^{ing} the courage, the faith, the determination of men and women is as basic as the need ~~for~~ feeding the body. And the young people;- we cannot see a class graduating from high school or college into a world that has no place for them without sadly wondering what will become of their youthful ambitions and their eager zeal to do something worth while. Will their courage stand up under this long testing; will they keep their ambition or grow bitter and resentful and turn against society?

~~We~~ All of us are facing the^{se} facts and we ~~all~~ recognize that we ^{the public library} are one of the most effective agencies there is for stemming the wave of mental depression. We are a great relief agency, able in some measure to

help the discouraged, hopeless, beaten man to regain faith in himself and to fight his way back to mental health through the stimulus of books. How shall we put ourselves in contact with these men and women?

That is what I understand by the problem of publicity under the peculiar situation of today. Just how far should we go? Should we undertake any organized campaign, different from usual? What we might do, if we

were able to
~~could~~ function to full capacity, up to the extreme need of our community, is not the measure of what we can do now. Most of us are suffering from diminished budgets to meet a much increased demand.

The amount of publicity which we dare to indulge in must be governed by the extent to which we can back up our promises:

Mr. Charles Brown laid down a principle at a previous publicity round table, with which I think we would all agree. "Publicity must be backed up by service. The slogan to the effect that 'we are advertised by our loving friends' holds particularly in the case of established institutions such as public libraries. If you cannot give service, let the publicity go until you can."

To most of us the question we propose to ourselves is something like this: Is it worth while to advertise much when the demands are already bearing so heavily on our resources that we cannot meet them, or is this the time to make our wants most vocal to the general tax paying public, ^{to make} and a statement of our widespread usefulness most convincing? That will be a fruitful question for discussion in this group. A letter to several librarians brought the following:

Mr. Malcolm Wyer of Denver wrote, "We have not been following any campaign of special publicity during these difficult times, because we are overwhelmed with patrons as it is." But he mentions the advertising by lists, by book displays, by practical service.

Mr. Joseph Wheeler of Baltimore says: "We have curtailed our publicity steadily for the last year or two. We have discontinued exhibits at various shows, - food shows, automobile shows, etc. Anything which seems to imply that we have time or funds to do more work than we are now doing would, I think be poor publicity." He too then stresses the distribution of lists of all sorts and the effort to make the library

service most effective without special drain on its funds.

Mr. Hadley of Cincinnati also writes, "We have not been doing any especial publicity work during the period of depression with a hope of increasing the demands made on the library but we have been trying to have some publicity to help emphasize the place of the library as a stabilizing influence in the present situation." Again he says a rather significant thing that might set us to thinking, "We have been trying very definitely to abstain from any publicity or other expression from the library which would show any nervousness on our part. None of us knows what the future will bring forth, but I believe it is good psychology for us to maintain a calm attitude and to inspire confidence that in spite of the present depression, the community will see to it that the library will be supported to the best of the community's ability."

Mr. Bostwick of St. Louis with his usual unfailing optimism writes, "We ought not to cease our efforts at publicity because we are at present overworked."

> These statements probably cover pretty much what all librarians would say. The effort at publicity in our minds, seems to be directed toward two different

Mr. Hadley of Detroit writes: "We have not done much publicity work, tho we expect to take the matter into our confidence after Budget matters are crystallized."

objectives, that of stressing the value of the library to the community and its consequent claim to support and that of reaching individuals with helpful suggestions of service.

With reference to the former, that of keeping our claims for support to the fore, we will have to agree that the old arguments to secure funds are rather obsolete. People are clamoring for decreased taxes; they are scrapping in a heartless way some of the things they were most proud of. Public services which have been built up with great effort and pride are being ruthlessly pulled down. Hard times do strange things; they warp judgments; people's souls shrink. Instead of being proud of being a public official one feels after reading the papers that it is rather a disgrace to be drawing a salary from public funds.

We face the need of leading public opinion, and
~~We are molding public opinion, we are~~ adapting

public habits to our changed and hampered services.
mitous loss of public friendliness.

We are certainly experimenting in how best to win

to continued
public approval of library support. Mr. Strohm

expressed his opinion that "We should practice balance, not press our claims for recognition too incessantly;"

adding, ~~"We librarians should face our problems as~~

~~linked up with human problems and civilization~~

Perhaps this is true, but the
~~generally."~~ *need to offset the learning down*
process going on in such an unreasoning way

and are justified in building up support.

Newspaper ⁻⁶⁻ ~~man~~ Malcom ~~them~~ relating to

~~But~~ newspaper items of our progress, the increase in our work, the type of work we are doing, and the response of the people to it, ~~are welcomed by newspapers,~~ and I think it is due to the public to keep them in touch with the activities of this public institution, even if we deliberately do it with an eye to our budget. If we who know its value do not labor for the maintenance of the budget, who in heaven's name will? In looking over our newspaper clippings of the past few months, I find that the amount of library publicity covers a good many columns, and contains a good deal of attractive and persuasive material.

If we have through all the years past, developed a deep-seated place as a vital part of our community, if we have for years sold the library in season and out of season to our people, we will have to depend upon them to be our best possible publicity agents. If we have made ourselves indispensable in the homes of our people, if we have entered practically every home through children or father or mother, we have done beforetime the publicity which will support us best.

*Just as I started (Mr Malcom called
from a Newspaper man
(over))*

from Librarian

But most of the remarks quoted above refer not to publicity through outside channels, but [^]~~through~~ *stress publicity* through inside methods: Quiet publicity through book lists, ^{personal} through courtesies, through simple unostentatious helpfulness. Using our own library as a typical one, we have not been able to afford our regular monthly bulletin of new books, so we have multigraphed numerous short lists of recommended new books, or books on interesting subjects. From the Technical Department, a list on "Spare-time money making," on "Beauty culture," on "Sound pictures," on "Oil burners and fuel oil," on "Home renovation and repair," on "The spring garden," and "Readable books on science," following the interests of readers in choosing the subjects. We have issued lists of good magazine articles on "Gold and silver," on "A plan for America," on "A changing world," to direct people's minds to the better magazines. Because so many new borrowers feel a little lost in using the library, we have the Open Shelf collection better labeled than usual. We have small display shelves of interesting books standing on desks or tables. It is apparently so much easier for people to choose from a dozen titles than from the bewildering hundreds of unknown titles. For the library has been full of people who ordinarily are

not given to much reading but who have been driven to it to occupy their minds. We all know that this interesting situation can be capitalized, often to the great benefit of some people whom we never before have reached. The readers' advisers all over the country can bear testimony to this. But these people with their new found interest in the library are our eager advertisers. They have found the library unexpectedly easy to use. We have wiped out practically all red tape; ^{People} they have met courtesy and helpfulness, and they quite evidently tell their neighbors and perhaps carry books home to their neighbors. ^P Our library is situated on a busy corner directly upon the sidewalk with windows at eye level. People wait on this corner for street cars: It is an ideal place for publicity items. We have taken full advantage of it with attractive window displays changed frequently. We have found that those posters attract most which suggest some new way to make money, and people come in constantly to make further enquiries about something that has been suggested by the window display.

We cannot be an employment agency, yet as people who have had good experience ask us to remember them

if we have a chance to turn employment their way, we do keep names of people who can qualify as tutors or high class stenographers, or in various other lines. The readers advisers have intimate knowledge of the ability of people who are taking reading courses with them, and they keep a record of those who are doing good, serious work, and give them permission to refer to us. This function has to be used with much judgment, but it is a practical service and has helped people in a number of instances. On the whole there is no publicity which has better advertising quality than that done within our walls and by our own staff efforts and carried out ^{beyond our walls} by satisfied borrowers. Even our economies and small inside exactions to save expense have caused some good and favorable publicity. In the language of another librarian, "We have made it clear that we don't intend to have the general tax payer pay the high costs of services caused by the careless minority," and the ^{then} public commented on it and commended this stand, in newspaper articles. The co-operation of the public with us in carrying out overhead economies has been somewhat unexpected, but most gratifying.

May I return now to a previous statement that the library must be considered in these days as a great

relief agency. We are accustomed to ally ourselves and rightly so with the educational agencies. But we belong just as much with the social agencies, and every library should be a social service agency, recognized as such by the other organized social agencies. Perhaps no more telling publicity just at this time could be launched either in the minds of the contributing public or in the minds of the general and non-employed public, than the identification of the librarian with other social workers and the efforts of the library to reach into every corner of desolation with our particular method of relief as a real contributory social agency.

We have found widespread sympathy with the library's efforts, when speaking before business men's clubs, or women's clubs, if we have stressed our direct efforts to help supply the lodging houses, the missions, the cheap hotels, the public relief rooms, with reading matter

What is our education worth if it does not relate us to all of our human obligations? The library is a very human institution; it must be known to every one as such. We librarians are not only librarians; we are citizens with great human obligations as individuals. Nothing can so establish the attitude of our institution as our own known attitude toward social activities. Why shouldn't

the librarian be one of the outstanding leaders on civic boards and committees? Why shouldn't the librarian help to direct city-wide movements to increase recreational facilities, to further vocational guidance? Why shouldn't the librarian be on the Boards of Federated churches and known to all the groups of ministers as one vitally interested in righteousness? Why shouldn't library assistants be encouraged to render every possible service to other organizations until the idea of the library is connected in the minds of other workers with the whole idea of human

The Connection of the
obligations? ~~When the librarian and library assistants~~
librarian name with other city interests,
~~tents are known apart from their professional duties~~
as tying up the library with every
~~as sympathetic workers in every kind of effort for~~

for an assurance that
social betterment, ~~then the feeling toward the library~~
the library is keeping in step with
~~takes on the same idea.~~
every forward looking movement.
We are in a crisis greater than any we have ever

experienced. We spent millions during the War to maintain the morale of our citizens. We will have to spend ourselves these days to maintain the morale of today's citizens. And we ourselves, and our staff, can be our own best publicity.

How are we going to make contact with these hopeless men and women that we want most to reach, the

man who perhaps has always had plenty and now under great adversity withdraws into himself with pride and bitterness, the man who doggedly faces his losses and begins without any illusions to pull a few embers from the quenched fire of his ambitions?

We believe that he may sense the new type of library we are building to fit a new condition. He will sense from our attitude that he ^{Known Social} can be at home, no embarrass-^{will find} ments, no questions asked, ^{that he will find} in one public institution ~~where there is fuel~~ for his flickering fire, or comfort for his anxious mind. -

This is not theory, not visionary. ^{So} Together with the old methods of publicity, we must add the new and more personal method of establishing in the minds of ~~individuals~~ ^{the public} that subtle sympathetic relationship that claims their affectionate ^S ~~acceptance~~ of as well as their respect for this very human institution, the public library. Are we ourselves willing to spend and be spent for the new library of the new day ahead?

Are we now-a-days trying to popularize our libraries by too much extension through personal publicity, or are we coming more + more to the intensive method of individual service and fitting our publicity to the type of service? The library is one of the great

Social agencies in the sociological
structure - as well as a hand of
the educational work.