
The Hatteras Library: A Small Unit in a Regional System

Anne D. Sanders

I first visited the Hatteras Library in December 1972. At that time the library was housed in an abandoned school building, was operated by volunteers, and was made up largely of gift books. Mrs. Lillie Peele, a Hatteras native and natural-born librarian, spent most of her time managing the library, carefully selecting the few new books that the \$500.00 per year budget allowed, and maintaining records. Mrs. Peele and I immediately established a relationship full of mutual concerns for the library, not the least of which was to make the Hatteras Library a part of the East Albemarle Regional Library system. To make a long story short, that feat was accomplished in April 1977, at which time the library was moved to one section of the new Hatteras Community Building that now stands on the site of the old schoolhouse. Unfortunately, Lillie Peele did not live to see her dream come true, but I have made every possible effort since her death to make the Hatteras Library the kind of institution she so desired for the residents of the village.

A number of steps have been taken since 1977 to make the collection viable. First, the entire collection had to be screened. This was done under the supervision of Judith Israel, who was the Dare County Librarian at that time. After the initial sorting, all uncataloged books were classified by Elizabeth Hermann, a retired librarian and tireless volunteer. A card catalog was set up, and the library began to take shape. The major problem at that time was the scarcity of new books. The regional book selection policy stated that materials purchased for Hatteras would have to come from Dare County Library's share of the book budget. The regional book budget was so small then that none of the libraries was receiving an adequate number of new books. Therefore, a serious attempt was made to keep a large circulating collection in Hatteras, drawn from the other libraries in the region. When we could spare the money, we added some professional tools for the Hatteras librarian, Yancey Foster, and sometimes took several staff

members for a day-long work session to help catch up on filing and typing.

Then in 1983/84, with additional state aid, we were finally in a position to study the Hatteras collection with enthusiasm. One article proved to be especially useful to Yancey, Amy Frazer (the Dare County Librarian) and me. The article, entitled "A Bare Bones Nonfiction Collection for Small Vermont Public Libraries" and written by Marianne Cassell, Development and Adult Services Consultant, Department of Libraries, Montpelier, Vermont 05602, appeared in *The Unabashed Librarian*, number 45, 1982. Using the article as a starting point, Amy checked the shelves while I consulted with Yancey and took copious notes. As we talked, Yancey was able to recall requests for materials which the library did not own. Amy handled practically every volume in the non-fiction collection as we worked, thereby assessing its use and condition. When we finished going through the bibliography, I had several pages of titles and subjects to be ordered. These I turned over to Alise Irvin, in charge of acquisitions for the region, who used the standard catalogs primarily for sources.

A particularly difficult area for us was the reference collection, which was scant. Because the entire library space is only 1,890 square feet, we had to be highly selective in our choices. In the area of literature, especially, I thought of times when even our largest library could not satisfy the demands of students; what then should I choose for Hatteras, which had virtually no material in the 800s? A trip back to the headquarters library proved helpful at this point. With pad in hand, I scanned the reference collection and noted the materials that had been most useful to me in the past.

For the large number of tourists who visit the Outer Banks in the summer, I was especially anxious to have available historical materials, as well as additional materials related to the area. These included commercial and sport fishing, boat construction, small engine repair, marine life, marine science, and seashell identification. I see this area of the collection growing in the future, as well it

Anne D. Sanders is Director of the East Albemarle Regional Library.

should. I strongly believe that public libraries should reflect the interests and natural characteristics of the area in which they are located.

Again, I gave subject requests to Mrs. Irvin, who carefully chose the best of each subject she could find. Our ubiquitous enemy was, and continues to be, space or the lack of it. It is in the area of adult fiction that space really presents a problem.

Amy's thoughts on this were that the adult fiction collection should be maintained largely by circulating titles from the other three libraries in the region, thereby utilizing shelf space to its fullest advantage. One of the advantages of a regional library is that both money and shelf space are extended by our constantly moving and sharing single titles. For example, it has been a policy of this system since the beginning to buy only one copy of a mystery or western title (unless there is a great deal of promotion of a particular title) for the entire region. Mrs. Irvin spreads the ownership so that one library gets every third new mystery or western title. The justification for this is that even if we had unlimited funds and space, we could never satisfy the appetites of our avid mystery readers. Since many mysteries are read at one sitting, they are returned quickly, which means that they will move on to the next library in a short time.

Public libraries should reflect the interests and natural characteristics of the area in which they are located.

The second opinion that Amy had was that the permanent adult fiction collection did not need to include as many literary classics as the other three libraries, since interlibrary loan could take care of any requests in this area. The Hatteras Library is visited at least once a week by someone from the Dare County Library or region for the purpose of transferring books and other library materials and equipment. In addition, I encourage Yancey to use the telephone as often as needed, even though Hatteras calls are long distance to the other libraries. Because of the distance involved, library service is made more efficient by the use of the telephone for requests. We also use the postal service to its greatest advantage. The Dare County Library and Hatteras Library staff have become quite resourceful in

finding ways to transport books and equipment: the trustee who lives in Frisco, the sheriff, the mail truck driver, and anyone who is going to or coming from Hatteras, is likely to end up with a box of books and notes for Yancey or Amy.

Having concurred with Amy's suggestions, I then agreed that Hatteras should have its own copy of highly popular new adult fiction titles. Space for these titles is not a factor, since oftentimes the physical life of a popular book is not long, and the problem takes care of itself.

The next area we have to consider is the juvenile collection. For this, I am going to rely heavily on the expertise of our newest regional staff member, Carol Veitch, who holds a Ph.D. in Library Science. Carol was associate professor in the Department of Library Science at East Carolina University before joining us as librarian of the Currituck County Library. She also has twelve years experience as a school librarian. Carol will serve a double role in the region as county librarian and co-ordinator of children's services. Because she has been with the region less than a year, I have purposely waited on the Hatteras project until she is fully acclimated to the area and her new position. She and I have discussed the situation, and I feel confident that she will make prudent decisions.

One thing that I learned quickly as a director was to utilize the skills and expertise of my staff. In the area of collection building, I found this particularly helpful for the Hatteras Library. Creativity and resourcefulness were essential in dealing with the small space with which we had to work.



This publication is available in microform from University Microfilms International.

Please send information about these titles:

Name _____

Company/Institution _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____

Call toll-free 800-521-3044. Or mail inquiry to:
University Microfilms International, 300 North
Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.