

INFORMATION UNLIMITED

The Modern Library in Today's World

The above captions will be used for a kit of materials to be released by ALA when the new public library standards are published this fall. The kit will include a booklet summarizing the standards in lay terms and a film strip which may be used by trustees, friends and other community groups to explain the new standards.

Public Library Service to America is the title of the new work which represents the combined efforts of hundreds of librarians who responded to inquiries of the ALA committee responsible for the publication. Dean Lowell A. Martin of Rutgers University chaired the committee and North Carolina's Hoyt Galvin of Charlotte was a member.

Two essential themes run through the new document: library facilities at the level which people demand to meet the many responsibilities of this dynamic period; and such facilities for all people, not just those who live within walking distance of a large headquarters library.

The key to the plan is the establishment of public library "systems" throughout the nation. "Public library facilities in America should be tied together in a network that equalizes library opportunity and brings the resources of the strongest libraries to all." This concept does not remove the need for adequate funds from each community for support of its library.

"Libraries working together, sharing their services and materials, can meet the full needs of their readers. This cooperative approach on the part of libraries is the most important single recommendation of this document. Without joint action, most American libraries will never be able to come up to the standards necessary to meet the needs of their constituencies."

In North Carolina small beginnings have already been made in such cooperative effort. Some smaller libraries freely exchange bookstock with neighboring counties. And statewide a system of special subject collections available through any public library has been established in the State Library and public libraries all over the state. The Adult Film Project has made it possible for thirty-three public libraries to receive a different group of films each month, and all public libraries to book specific films. These activities have been stimulated and partially financed with state and local funds in cooperative effort. It is to be expected that federal funds can make more cooperation possible.

The new publication urges libraries "to band together, informally or formally in groups" or "systems" so that "the reader in smaller and more remote places will have access not only to all books and materials in his region, but beyond that to the resources of the state and nation." It would seem that the new standards indicate that public library development in North Carolina is following sound principles and provide the incentive to accelerate progress in cooperative activities.

Although minimum per capita cost figures may be found in the new standards they are not stressed. Qualitative, rather than quantitative standards are recommended. Good library service cannot be measured on the basis of per capita expenditure. A minimum cost figure is only useful when used along with other criteria.