

PAPERS FROM THE RECRUITING CONFERENCE

On May 10 and 11, 1958, a Library Recruiting Conference was held in Raleigh under the sponsorship of the North Carolina Library Association and with the cooperation of the American Library Association. Emerson Greenaway, President of the American Library Association, moderated the four sessions. A report on the Conference made by Cora Paul Bomar appeared in the October, 1958, issue of North Carolina Libraries. The following four papers were presented at the Conference.



GOOD LIBRARY SERVICE FOR NORTH CAROLINA

What is good library service for North Carolina? It is that combination of library materials, facilities, and services which encourages and enables each North Carolinian to achieve his maximum potential in every area of his life — in his work and in his play, in his relationships with his environment, his fellows, with himself, and with his God. Good library service, together with good schools, makes the difference, as one authority has said, between communities and *civilized* communities. Both schools and libraries are necessary to the growth and development of a state (and of a nation) where every man is an effective citizen and where all the people have the equal opportunity which our democratic society implies to enrich their personal lives and to enlarge their opportunities to the limit of their native abilities and their natural inclinations.

Good library service, like good formal education, is essential to our modern free society because the maintenance and progress of our civilization, the development of our culture, and indeed, the very preservation of that political and economic system which we believe to be the best yet devised by man, depend upon informed and enlightened citizens. And, in an age when knowledge expands geometrically and the tensions of day-to-day living are heightened by the ever-increasing complexity of social forces focused upon each individual, the need of each man for information and enlightenment not only continues throughout his life, but also increases with each day of his life. To improve his work, to develop his hobbies, to understand his world, and to increase his perceptiveness and appreciation of the values and the beauty which add meaning to his life, each person is dependent upon the accumulated experiences of mankind. These are available to him in the books, pictures, films, sound recordings and other forms of recorded knowledge upon which man depends for the preservation and transmission of his culture.

As the fundamentals of man's basic education have increased, as the vocational, industrial, and business know-how has expanded, and as the varieties of cultural, aesthetic, and recreational activities have become more varied, so has the need for the materials necessary to comprehend and make use of this expansion been intensified. Where library service a hundred years ago was thought to be more of a cultural luxury, it is today a basic need, and just ordinary library service is not enough.

The elements of good library service, whether to schools, to business, to research, or to the more general public are the same: an adequate and well-organized stock of materials, suitable facilities in which to house and use these materials, and a system of services which facilitate each man's use of those materials which are essential to his particular need at any given moment. Library collections, library buildings and quarters, and properly trained and qualified personnel to develop and provide the necessary services are basic to good library service in North Carolina — or in any other state, for that matter. A further condition is that these collections, facilities, and services shall be freely available to every man according to his need. Just as one man is probably unable to provide for himself all of the books which he needs for his work and his recreation, so it is unlikely that any one library can provide effectively for the diverse needs of all of the people it serves. Accordingly, good library service incorporates libraries of various types, each of which seeks to serve particular and special needs. The public school library provides the materials and the services needed by the young citizen as collateral to his classroom curriculum during the years when he is acquiring a basic formal education. The college and university library serves particularly the needs of higher education, scholarship, and research. The special library focuses its collections and services upon the practical requirements for information within the organization of which it is a part — the government, the law firm, the hospital, the industrial concern, or the business enterprise. And the public library seeks to provide for the informational and recreational needs of all the citizens, supplementing and complementing special services available in these other libraries, and providing services for those who do not have access to any other kind of library. Moreover, because the several kinds of libraries have been developed to serve particular needs, an essential ingredient of good library service is the adequate interlinking of all the libraries of the state — for no single library can provide all of the materials or services which its patrons will require.

Does North Carolina have good library service? Not yet, although much has been achieved. All but four per cent of the population has access to public library service. About three-quarters of the public school systems have organized libraries. The colleges and universities all have their own libraries, a few of which are distinguished, but most are merely adequate. The state also has a number of special libraries serving the needs of government, the medical and legal professions, hospitals, churches, and a few industrial firms. The growth of business and industry in the state will certainly require the development of more special libraries and the extension of special services by other libraries within the state. There is, however, an already established and operating network of cooperation among the state's libraries which makes possible better library service throughout the state than the several components could provide if each functioned entirely independently.

North Carolina needs more books and library materials in all of its libraries. The collections in all of the public libraries of the state provide only three-quarters of a book per person. While the minimum annual rate of growth for public library systems has been prescribed at no less than one volume for every five persons served, in 1956-57, the public libraries of North Carolina grew at the rate of only one volume for every sixteen persons. Public school libraries in North Carolina make available only five books per pupil, while accepted standards for good school library service prescribe a minimum of ten books per pupil. There are no specified standards for the number of books which each college or university library should have, because the curricular requirements of these institutions differ. But, in North Carolina, where fifty-five per cent of all the books in colleges and universities are found in only

two universities which serve about one-fourth of the total student group, it is apparent that a more adequate supply of materials is needed.

While many of North Carolina's libraries are housed in suitable quarters, and some in new and modern buildings, many more libraries need new or remodelled facilities to provide adequately for the services they are called upon to render. On the other hand, North Carolina leads the nation in the number of bookmobiles which carry library services to suburban, rural, and remote areas beyond easy access to central or branch libraries.

The particular needs for professionally-trained librarians are presented in another paper, but it can be observed in a general way here that there are great needs for trained librarians to develop and provide the services needed in the libraries of the state at all levels.

Good library service requires adequate financial support. The state's public libraries receive, on the average, only sixty-one cents per capita, approximately the cost of one movie ticket. If the average annual level of support were raised to three dollars per capita, the state would have the means with which to provide the excellent quality of library service a modern society requires. Current expenditures for school library materials are approximately fifty per cent of recommendations at national, regional, and state levels. Allocations for school library personnel, like appropriations for teacher salaries, are also well below the national level. It is more difficult to assess the needs for colleges and universities as a group, for each institution varies markedly from the others, and a generalization is not possible.

This brief summary outlines the general characteristics of and the need for good library service in North Carolina. Basic to the achievement of the desired goal is more adequate financial support. But next in importance are the trained librarians who will provide the essential services and direct the expenditure of funds. That North Carolina has already achieved as much with so little is a tribute to her present band of professional librarians. If more of these were available, more still could be done. North Carolinians would have available to them much sooner the quality of library service to which they are entitled, and which they so urgently need.