It was remembrance of childhood experiences in the library that prompted author Bel Kaufman to write in defense of libraries: "It seems to me that especially now, when there are so many people in our city [New York] whose language is not English, whose houses are barren of books, who are daily seduced by clamorous offers of instant diversion, especially now we must hold on to something that will endure when the movie is over, the television set broken, the class dismissed for the last time." ¹

The immigrant group from which Kaufman came found that schools and libraries were the key which opened the door for achieving the "American dream." Libraries played an important part in the educational and cultural lives of the early immigrants for whom life was difficult, but for whom the formula for success lay in assimilation into the American mainstream — a goal that was attainable. For later or other groups, however, some whose roots lay deep in the American soil, the very nightmare of coexistence foretold that the dream, in the words of the poet, was not only "deferred," but would be denied.²

The effects of the civil rights movement in arousing the social awareness of various institutions whose prime responsibility was services to people have already been mentioned. Not the least of these institutions are libraries. When libraries embraced "outreach" to the "unserved" (a euphemism for those groups later identified as the principal minority racial and ethnic groups in the country), they were approaching people who shared common bonds: poverty, undereducation, lack of skills, and disenchantment with promises that would not be fulfilled.

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It is to the credit of the profession that libraries undertook this tremendous task. The time was right, politically and financially. Government funding, foundation grants and other private monies were available to many institutions—to prove what? That dollars could compensate for educational gaps? That dollars could purchase standard English speech and provide an entry into the mainstream of American life? That dollars could provide or at least contribute to the evolution of a hyphenated-American, whose reception in society would indeed be eased by the time and efforts now being focused on his/her differing culture? Or, more importantly, that dollars would really erase century-old attitudes toward those highly visible individuals whose traditionally lower economic and social status had previously rendered them invisible?

As we read the professional literature with present hindsight, the recurring thought during these times of financial pressures is: How valid were the means used? How cost-effective the monies spent? What was the ratio of return in the achievement of this noble library goal to "serve the unserved"? Researchers have here a meaty subject in assessing the true effectiveness of these programs.

Before embarking in other directions, we must assess our accomplishments: today, the preschooler, the senior citizen; tomorrow, the exceptional—next year, all red-haired, brown-eyed people? What have we learned? How many from the homes Bel Kaufman mentions actually reaped the benefits of outreach? How many Bel Kaufmans did we locate whose use of libraries eased the language barriers? How many of us attempted attitudinal studies to measure the effectiveness of the library’s carefully prepared bibliographies mentioned earlier?

Actually, before black became beautiful, pioneers in the library profession, Charlamae Rollins in Chicago and Augusta Baker in New York, had established guidelines for work with children and adults and had attempted to arouse a sense of intercultural understanding and sensitivity through identification of certain elements in children’s books. The criteria they cited focused on the dangers of stereotyping and the absence of positive images for black children in the literature of the day, and their criteria for evaluation were later applied and researched in more formal studies. There is no doubt that later studies and books on the subject of racism and stereotyping have had a tremendous impact on the publication of children’s books from 1965 to the present.

Studies about the effect of cultural differences in language development, such as that by Doris R. Entwisle, would perhaps further illustrate whether our approaches to children of minority groups and non-English-speaking backgrounds are valid. While we use and introduce literature today so that the child will have a good positive self-image, do
we really know how children see themselves? Some studies indicate that children initially come to us with firm positive images. Children as individuals do need reassurance about their place in the family, but they also need to learn about others. It is not inconceivable for inner-city children to understand Anne Frank, or for children from low-income families to appreciate Harriet in Fitzhugh's story *Harriet the Spy*. Each of these stories brings the common human experience within the realm of all children regardless of their socioeconomic origins.

Perhaps it is sufficient that at least one child reader was able to reach adulthood and publicly to declare the influence of libraries on her life. As Bel Kaufman describes it, the librarian was not concentrating on her special needs or background. She was available, knowledgeable about books and efficient in her ability to disseminate information. Nevertheless, she had touched a child who had merely come to read.

**REFERENCES**