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PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign Library
Some Problems in Book Selection Policies and Practices
in Medium-Sized Public Libraries

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Introduction

Book selection policies and practices have been of concern to the library profession for many years. In recent years, the Committee on Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association sponsored two Institutes prior to the A.L.A. Annual Conference held in 1952 and 1953 which were primarily devoted to the censorship aspect of book selection. In 1955, prior to the Philadelphia Conference, the A.L.A. Committee on Intellectual Freedom and the Public Libraries Division co-sponsored a Work Conference on Book Selection which took a broader view of the problems of book selection in public libraries.

John D. Henderson, chairman of the A.L.A. Intellectual Freedom Committee, and Ruth W. Gregory, president of the Public Libraries Division, stated in their introduction to the Proceedings that "the values inherent in well-conceived book selection policy statements were of primary concern to the Public Libraries Division and the A.L.A. Intellectual Freedom Committee during 1954-55. They reported that a special study had revealed that written book selection policy statements were practically non-existent in libraries in communities below 60,000 population, and that both the study and the experience of the Intellectual Freedom Committee had substantiated the following conclusions among others:

"Written policy statements, where they exist, have become invaluable tools for sharpening the individual library's objectives and for interpreting its role in the support of the basic principle of the freedom to read; and profession-wide use of prepared policy statements would strengthen the position of the libraries of the nation, particularly for those which may be vulnerable to pressures that are not in the best interest of the public library and its goals."
They recognized that the preparation of a book selection policy statement was the responsibility of each local library depending on the library's objectives and the nature of the community; but they also felt that there were certain fundamental principles common to all. And it was the re-examination of those principles which was the focal point of the 1955 Book Selection Work Conference.

Following a general session at which four papers dealing with intellectual freedom, public library objectives, and book selection theory were presented, the 233 participants gathered in small discussion groups to review and analyze the various factors involved in public library book selection. At the final general session, the summary of discussion group reports was discussed by a panel with participation from the audience. One of the points discussed was the advisability of a written book selection policy statement. Although there was considerable division of opinion on the advisability of adopting such a written statement, a voice vote showed the majority favored a written policy.

As was brought out at the Philadelphia Conference, the whole problem of public library book selection can only be discussed profitably in the framework of public library objectives; library book selection policies and practices must be judged as to their adequacy by the degree to which they can be expected to promote these objectives.

In the course of the Public Library Inquiry, a consolidated statement, based on three statements of objectives for public libraries in the United States promulgated by the A.L.A. between 1943 and 1948, was mailed to the sixty libraries in the Inquiry sample and to fifty additional representative librarians and library school faculty members. The most relevant parts of the statement for our purposes follow:

"A) General Definition of Objectives

1) To assemble, preserve and administer books and related educational materials in organized collections, in order to promote, through guidance and stimulation, an enlightened citizenship and enriched personal lives,

2) To serve the community as a general center of reliable information,

3) To provide opportunity and encouragement for children, young people, men, and women to educate themselves continuously."

Replies were received from 80 per cent of the whole group, and five-sixths of those who replied accepted the statement of objectives as sound and accurate.
"Clearly, although opinion was not unanimous, there was a consensus in approval of the objectives."\(^6\)

However, there was a small group of dissenters who disagreed with the basic philosophy of the official objectives and who felt "that the public library's function is to give the people what they want whatever the nature and quality of the demand may be."\(^7\)

On the basis of personal observation of book selection practices in several libraries and of the discussion at the Philadelphia Work Conference, a hypothesis worth testing in this study seemed to be as follows: with regard to quality standards, particularly in the field of fiction, most librarians show a great deal of ambivalence (of which many are not at all aware) toward the quality standards demanded by the official public library objectives (to which a large majority subscribe) and the pressure of public demand which they feel they must meet.

The present study took the Philadelphia Work Conference as a starting point and assumed that a written book selection policy statement is desirable for all public libraries.

In order to arrive at some tentative conclusions as to the reasons for the gap between the publicly stated need for book selection policy statements and their dearth in actuality, particularly in small and medium-sized libraries, it was considered desirable to investigate current book selection policies and practices in some sample libraries. The method used is described in the next section. Most of the questions asked in the interviews and the book titles selected for checking holdings in the five libraries were chosen for the purpose of throwing some light on the following problems considered most crucial in public library book selection:

1. Quality standards, expressed often as "value versus demand";
2. Censorship;
3. Community characteristics and needs.

**Method**

Two methods were used to conduct the study: interviews with librarians in five libraries in the New York metropolitan area and checking of library holdings of certain titles in these libraries.

Since the purpose of the study was to shed some light on certain book selection policies and practices in medium-sized public libraries, the five libraries are not identified by name or location. Specific figures on such
community characteristics as population, median age, median family income, median school years completed, etc., as well as exact figures for library budgets, book budgets, etc., are purposely withheld in order to preserve the anonymity of the libraries.

The five libraries were located in communities which were similar in many respects; they were chosen as case studies rather than as typical of medium-sized public libraries on the assumption that their book selection policies and practices would reveal a considerable range which would illustrate a good many of the variations which actually exist in public libraries of that size.

In population, the communities ranged from about 15,000 to about 80,000. The communities and the libraries will be referred to as A, B, C, D, and E in descending order of size, i.e., A representing the largest and E the smallest of the five communities. With the exception of C, the communities were well above the average of the surrounding area in income and education. Communities B, D, and E were almost exclusively residential communities whereas A and C combined the characteristics of an industrial and suburban community.

Except for C, the communities had an older than average population which indicates a substantial number of retired people living there. The non-white population ranged from a low of less than 5 per cent in communities D and E to a high of about 20 per cent in communities B and C. As for nationality, the foreign born formed about 10 per cent of the population, with the Italians and Germans making up the largest groups.

The interviews dealt with the following subjects:

a. Book selection policy statement
b. Responsibility for adult book selection
c. Adult book selection procedures
d. Allocation of adult book funds
e. Rental collection
f. Standards applied in adult book selection
g. Community characteristics taken into consideration in book selection
h. Community attempts to influence book selection

Holdings of Titles

In the course of the Public Library Inquiry, R. D. Leigh undertook "to determine the extent to which present library resources in books and other materials enable public libraries to fulfill their stated objectives." In "The Public Library Inquiry's Sampling of Library Holdings of Books and Periodicals" Leigh reported on the results of the study. At least two types of public libraries
seemed to emerge from the Inquiry findings: one was the institution with a budget of $100,000 or more which was equipped to perform the functions outlined in the official public library objectives; the other was the institution with a budget of $10,000 or less which bought mainly bestseller fiction and nonfiction books but lacked the current publications of the highest quality and, therefore, the physical materials required by the official objectives. In between the two extremes were libraries with material resources of varying degrees of adequacy.  

Of the five libraries studied, libraries A and B had budgets well above $100,000, and the budgets of the other three libraries were between $40,000 and $75,000. In other words, the libraries fell either into the first group mentioned by Leigh, or into the in-between group.

While the Leigh study was concerned only with the adequacy of holdings of quality material, in this study an attempt is made to investigate also the holdings of some low quality material, particularly fiction. From the discussion of book selection policies and policy statements in the introduction, it will be seen that this point is relevant in terms of the function and objectives of the public library.

Since it was not possible to make a very comprehensive check of titles, the following procedure was adopted and the titles checked:

a. All fiction titles listed in the 1953, 1954, and 1955 "Notable Books" lists--eleven titles in all.
b. Ten nonfiction titles from the 1955 "Notable Books" list, all in the area of public affairs, five in the domestic and five in the international field.
c. Some controversial nonfiction titles: two titles by Blanshard, two titles by Kinsey, four titles about Senator McCarthy, one title by Velikovsky.
d. Three 1956 nonfiction titles illustrating different selection problems--Angoff, Strachey, West.
e. Three recent fiction titles illustrating different selection problems--Garland, Metalious, Norway.
f. Sample holdings of older low quality fiction were established by counting the number of titles (not copies of any particular title) by the following authors: Temple Bailey, Faith Baldwin, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Ethel Dell, Joseph C. Lincoln.
g. The "Selected List of Materials and Resources" issued in 1956 by the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups of the A. L. A. was used in part, and titles listed in section A of part V (Labor Movement) were checked. Except for the titles mentioned under a and b, all titles were checked in Booklist, and/or in Fiction Catalog, Standard Catalog for Public Libraries, and ALA Catalog where possible.

The holdings of these titles by the five libraries can be found in Appendix A.
Interview Findings

Book Selection Policy Statement. None of the five libraries had a book selection policy statement. The Board of Trustees of Library A had adopted both the "Library Bill of Rights" and the "Freedom to Read" statement, and at library D the "Library Bill of Rights" had been adopted.

The librarian of one of the three libraries which had not adopted any policy statement commented that it seemed dubious that the board, or at least one member of it, would respond favorably, and that it was, therefore, considered wiser not to bring it up, particularly in view of the fact that the library had not encountered any censorship problems.

The librarian of library A considered a book selection policy statement unnecessary in view of the adoption of the "Library Bill of Rights" and the "Freedom to Read" statement. The librarian of library D felt that there was no need for a book selection policy statement in a library of D's size where the small professional staff got together regularly for book selection purposes.

Responsibility for Adult Book Selection. The five libraries visited showed considerable variation in the spread of responsibility for adult book selection among the library staff. In one case, the assistant director was in complete charge of all adult book selection and received recommendations only from one other staff member. In the other four libraries, the library director made the final decision, but members of the staff participated in various ways.

The director of one of the libraries consulted staff members who were considered specialists in certain subject areas by background or experience. In two of the libraries, responsibility for adult book selection in specific areas was delegated to certain staff members: in one case the reference librarian had the responsibility for selection of reference material and for expenditure of the funds; in the other the reference librarian selected not only reference books but also the material in three subject areas.

In library A, *Kirkus* was routed to the head and assistant head of adult services, the assistant director, the branch librarians, and the director who made the final decision in case she disagreed with previous markings on selection of titles or number of copies.

In library D, the *Bookseller* (formerly *Retail Bookseller*) was routed to the entire full time staff, i.e. both professional and clerical; the director made the final decision on circulating fiction and nonfiction after discussion at a book meeting with the three other professional adult librarians. The director felt that routing of *Bookseller* and checking by the entire staff including the clerical members resulted in being closer to public demand, particularly in fiction.
None of the libraries made use of a community advisory committee in book selection (with the exception of one library which brought in a committee when the record collection was started), nor did the library board enter into this function.

As far as consultation of individual community experts was concerned, the following variations in practice were revealed: one library never consulted a community expert; another library had occasionally asked an expert in a technical field to give advice on discarding in such areas as astronomy, chemistry, physics; three of the libraries consulted a community expert occasionally in doubtful cases, e.g. a physician in the case of a book on arthritis, a minister in the field of religion, the head of the public health department, etc.

Adult Book Selection Procedures. Generally speaking, adult books were bought outright in all five libraries, and wherever possible were ordered pre-publication. The following tools were used in book selection:

Table I

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<tr>
<th>Tools Used in Book Selection</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York Times Book Review</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Booklist and Subscription Books Bulletin</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bookseller</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday Review</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publisher's Weekly</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library Journal</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkus</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilson Bulletin</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Republic</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>School and Society</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Book Review Index</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishers' catalogs</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Two main reasons were given for the fact that books were not ordered on approval, and that they were not read and reviewed by staff members. One was the importance of having books available on the day of publication; the other was the feeling expressed by one librarian that in a medium-sized library reading and reviewing of adult books by the staff was too time consuming and not worth-while.

In very doubtful cases, purchase was postponed until reviews were available, the book was actually examined, or, in library A, one reading copy was
bought which might be made rental if the book was not considered worth adding to the permanent collection.

In all libraries public demand was a factor in selection of both fiction and nonfiction. In some cases, requests for very special material were met by borrowing from neighboring libraries or from the state library. But generally, the libraries were quite liberal in meeting public demand although an attempt was made to resist buying material that was considered below the library's selection standards. As far as duplicate copies were concerned, an attempt was made not to keep people waiting too long. In three of the libraries a duplicate copy was bought for every fourth, sixth and tenth reserve respectively; in the fourth library copies were added whenever reserves got so heavy that people were kept waiting for more than four weeks; and in library A generally enough duplicate copies were provided in advance to satisfy the demand.

Library A had also just begun to experiment with a new policy of buying "review" copies of certain titles not considered worth adding to the library collection. One or more "review" copies were bought and kept at the desk without being listed in the catalog. On request the book was given to adult readers asking them for their comment. A slip with the following text was put into each book:

"This is a review copy.

"Based upon available information, we have not been able to justify adding this book to our permanent collection.

"Your comment will help us reach a final decision. You need not sign your name."

At the time of the interview this device was used for Peyton Place; if this policy had been in effect earlier, it would have been applied to such titles as Walk on the Wild Side, by Nelson Algren and The Search for Bridey Murphy, by Morey Bernstein. The theory behind this new policy was that the majority of readers would agree that the book in question was not worth adding to the library collection, or, on rare occasions, that the library's decision not to buy for permanent inclusion should be reversed.

Allocation of Adult Book Funds. The adult book funds of the five libraries ranged from a high of about $30,000 for library A to a low of about $5,000 for library E. Library B spent about $20,000 on adult books, library C about $7,500, and library D about $8,000.
Three of the libraries did not divide their adult book funds into fiction and nonfiction. Library A bought very little fiction out of city funds; the rental collection paid for most of it. Except for replacements, a subsidy of 50 cents a volume was paid from the regular budget to the rental funds when volumes were transferred. Only one of the libraries divided the funds for circulating adult books roughly into about one-third for fiction, and two-thirds for nonfiction.

Two of the libraries made no allocation whatsoever for various classes of nonfiction, two made an allotment for reference books. Library A itemized the proposed expenditures of its book funds in considerable detail in the budget itself. But except for subject needs which were itemized under "Information and Research" and "Special Projects" which were itemized under Adult Reader Services, no planned allocation of funds for adult nonfiction circulating books by class or subject took place.

One of the librarians commented that allocation of adult book funds to fiction and nonfiction and by subject in nonfiction was not considered wise because the quality of books in various areas cannot be foreseen from year to year.

**Rental Collection.** All five libraries maintained rental collections which were chiefly or entirely fiction. In three of the libraries, the rental collection contained only duplicates of titles in the regular collection. Library C bought mysteries for the rental collection only. In library A, mysteries, westerns, and light fiction were bought for the rental collection only and were not cataloged. However, a duplicate order slip was filed in the catalog as for all other books; this was pulled—although not too systematically—when the book was received. After about four months rental books were transferred to the regular collection (although not always all the duplicate copies); but mysteries, westerns, and light fiction were still not cataloged, and no reserves were taken for material not listed in the catalog.

In three of the libraries duplication of titles for the regular collection was affected by the existence of the rental collection. Ephemeral titles, bestseller, and other popular titles in great demand were duplicated heavily in the rental collection rather than in the regular collection, e.g., in one of the libraries only one copy of *Peyton Place* was in the regular collection as against three copies in the rental collection.

**Standards Applied in Adult Book Selection.**

**Community Characteristics Taken into Consideration in Book Selection.**

**Community Attempts to Influence Book Selection.** While library A considered recreation also a basic function of the library, it did not purchase all light fiction. As reported above, very little of the book budget was spent on substandard material since the rental collection largely paid for it. This material
was also played down by not being listed in the catalog. As far as keeping a balance in controversial subject areas was concerned (e.g. religion), the librarian of library A considered it very important to have a well balanced staff to insure fair coverage of different viewpoints. She also felt that some libraries neglected to buy material expressing an extremely conservative point of view (the report on holdings of material about Senator McCarthy below will indicate that library A does not hesitate to give ample representation to the liberal point of view, too.)

Providing for the interests of the community, in the opinion of the librarian of library A, can best be achieved by going out into the community and by being very sensitive to patron requests; she doubted that formal surveys would reveal the "hidden" interests. The following were mentioned as examples of community characteristics and interests taken into consideration in book selection: material by and about Negroes bought for the main library was duplicated for the branch located in the Negro neighborhood while the other branches bought a little more lightly in this field; the insurance and the art collections were being built up because of community interest; the same was true for the dilettante aspects of nature.

An attempt at censorship by the president of an anti-communist organization who was a resident of the community had been resisted successfully because, in the librarian's opinion, of the earlier adoption of the "Freedom to Read" statement. The protest had been directed against the showing of a film by the library because one of the actors was supposed to be a communist.

Library B attempted over-all coverage in its book selection. It tried to meet the great public demand expressed on Monday morning for books reviewed in the Sunday book review sections of the New York Times and the New York Herald Tribune by buying at least one copy. The library put in controversial material and tried to cover all sides of a question.

The high percentage of bankers, and the great many retired people caused the library to subscribe to many financial services in the reference collection, and to buy liberally material on old age, retirement, etc. An active college women's club accounted for the library's duplication of books for the Books and Author luncheon. The library also tried to cover the range of course subjects presented by the very popular adult school (some of the daytime classes met in the library). The answer to the question as to whether the library considered in its book selection the rather large group of Negroes who form one-fifth of the community was negative.

There had been some attempts at censorship: the DAR had protested the library's purchase of some "unpatriotic" material, and a person in favor of the United Nations had objected to some anti-United Nations material. In both cases the library board had backed the librarian, and the material was kept.
Library C looked for literary value in fiction; it bought also some light fiction, westerns, science-fiction, bestsellers (and mysteries for rental only). The library did not buy for circulation figures, but for a well-rounded collection and for all reading levels—letting television supply the soap opera needs, though. In nonfiction, the best technical and scientific books on a layman's level were bought, but the library did not buy for college students and, therefore, did not buy textbooks as such. The same was true in the field of education. Care was taken to provide material on all sides of a question (e.g. both Blanshard and O'Brien), particularly in the area of politics and economics. Material on religion and family relations (including sex) was bought liberally.

The sizable number of factories meant that C, in contrast to the other communities visited with the exception of A, combined the characteristics of an industrial and suburban community; and this accounted for library C's liberal buying policy in the field of labor relations. (However, the librarian stated regretfully that the books did not go out). The Civil Rights Commission got notices of all pertinent books but there was not much response.

There had not been any community attempts to influence the library's book selection.

Library D felt strongly that public demand was legitimate as a major consideration in book selection in the case of adult books. Since the library was a tax-supported institution, the people had a right to see and read what they wanted. The library imposed only a limitation in terms of duplication: if the quality of the book was considered poor, only one copy of it was bought. In purchasing of pseudo-science, the library followed the Booklist recommendations. The library tried to present all sides of controversial questions.

Since library D was located in a homogeneous, residential community (lower-upper and upper-middle class), there was no need to buy heavily on special industries or occupations. The very limited holdings of labor material—only two out of twenty-six titles checked, and two titles in earlier editions—was explained by the character of the community which was described as "predominantly anti-union." The librarian felt that there was no point in buying material that would sit on the shelf or would make people mad. The library had begun to buy a little more in the area of industrial relations because there were many engineers in the community who were interested in this field.

The library tried to follow the interest of special groups in its book selection, e.g., the National Council of Jewish Women when they studied Africa. The major cultural interests of the community were music and art, the classics, well written literary works. There was also considerable interest in home and gardening and how-to-do-it material.
There had been two kinds of community attempts to influence library book selection. A Jewish group had objected to a fairy tale because of an "anti-semitic" character in it. Having adopted the "Library Bill of Rights," the library board backed the librarian, and the book was retained. Attempts by individual mothers to keep books off the shelves that they "did not want their children to read" had been met successfully by reference to the "Library Bill of Rights" and by pointing out that an adult collection cannot be selected on the basis of standards for adolescents and juvenile readers, and that children's reading was basically the responsibility of the parents.

In library E, a small, very vocal group of women wanted books immediately after reading the book review sections of the Sunday papers. The library tried to meet this demand although with a certain amount of misgiving on the part of the librarian who felt that the library catered a little too much to its public in general. The library tried to provide balance in such areas as politics, religion, etc.

Since library E was located in a "bedroom community," there were very few industrial demands; requests for material on insurance, economics, etc., came mostly from students. But the library did not buy textbooks as such, or specifically for students. There was a great deal of interest in travel, particularly for recent books and the latest editions of travel guides. Self-improvement books were much more popular than how-to-do-it books.

There was one attempt at censorship: a Catholic priest complained to a board member about the Blanshard titles; the board member brought it up at a board meeting and after lengthy discussion the board voted in favor of keeping the books in the library.

Discussion of Findings

The five librarians interviewed considered a book selection policy statement either unnecessary or the need for it taken care of by the adoption of the "Library Bill of Rights" or the "Freedom to Read" statement. This indicates that they were placing the emphasis on only one aspect of a book selection policy statement, i.e., that of censorship.

Interestingly enough, the four libraries which had experienced community attempts at censorship all managed to curb these attempts successfully: in the case of libraries A and D with the help of the previously adopted "Library Bill of Rights" and the "Freedom to Read" statement, in the case of libraries B and E without the adoption of either of the statements. Library C had not encountered any censorship problem and felt it was best not to raise the problem with the library board.
As far as the censorship aspect of a written book selection policy statement is concerned, the evidence in the case of the five libraries visited is inconclusive. However, this does not invalidate the conclusion of the A.L.A. Intellectual Freedom Committee since the experience of the Committee over the years has been extensive and five libraries in the New York metropolitan area are obviously not a representative sample, particularly in this respect.

Other aspects of a book selection policy statement will be discussed later after the actual book selection policies and practices of the five libraries have been examined more closely.

Responsibility for Adult Book Selection

Spread of participation in adult book selection ranged from practically no spread—where the assistant librarian was in charge of selection with advice from only one staff member—to spread among a number of professional staff members with the final responsibility assumed by the library director. In one library participation in book selection went beyond the professional staff and included the full-time clerical staff. In view of the reason given by the librarian for this practice, i.e., being closer to the public, particularly in fiction, the question might be raised as to whether this does not lower the library's book selection standards. Only close observation over some time, and comparison with other libraries not using this device would provide a definite answer.

Whether or not wide spread of staff participation in book selection has an effect on the quality of the book collection, it is not possible to say on the basis of the data obtained. As was pointed out in the Public Library Inquiry, spread of participation is used in many libraries for purposes other than selection, i.e., "dissemination of knowledge of library materials and maintenance of morale by providing for participation in a preferred group activity." Whether centralizing the function of selection, with the resulting saving of many professional man hours, affects the quality of the library collection, effective work with the public or staff morale, can only be established by detailed comparative studies.

All libraries felt that book selection was basically the function of the professional staff, and that, except in very special cases, participation by the library board or consultation of a community committee or an individual expert was not desirable.
Adult Book Selection Procedures

The emphasis all five libraries put on pre-publication ordering so that the books could be on the shelf on the day of publication—which they considered an essential part of good library service—accounted for some purchases which might not occur when books are either ordered on approval or are generally examined, and in some cases read and reviewed by staff members before purchase. A case in point is the biography H. L. Mencken, by Charles Angoff, published in 1956. This book was not listed in Booklist and received either unfavorable or mixed notices in all reviews quoted in the Book Review Digest. But it was bought just the same by all libraries except library D. While it seems perfectly legitimate for the Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore to buy all Mencken material even when it does not meet quality standards because of Mencken's local importance, there does not seem to be any good reason for medium-sized libraries—three of which with somewhat limited book funds—to buy a poor book about Mencken.

The same holds true for Nevil Shute's Beyond the Black Stump, also published in 1956. Again the book was not listed in Booklist, and all reviews quoted in Book Review Digest were unfavorable. But all five libraries bought this novel. In addition to the stress on pre-publication ordering, another factor may have entered into this purchase. Shute is a popular author, and his books are widely read; therefore, on the basis of past experience, a new title by him is assumed to be on the same level and is, therefore, bought automatically.

There are, of course, only two ways of finding out whether an author's latest book comes up to the level of those he published previously: one is reading and reviewing by staff members, and the other is waiting for reviews. Since waiting for reviews would interfere with prompt service, it is clear why the libraries do not do it. As for reading and reviewing by staff members, many of the large public libraries devote a great deal of staff time to it as part of their book selection practice. At the Enoch Pratt Library, all fiction is read and reviewed by at least one staff member, and in doubtful cases by more than one. In Detroit, all fiction and a great deal of nonfiction is read and reviewed for use in the Home Reading Services (branches and the Home Reading Department at the Main Library), a small rotating committee votes for acceptance or rejection, and in some particularly critical cases (e.g. Peyton Place, by Grace Metalious) the whole committee made up of all branch librarians and the head of the Home Reading Department make the final decision by majority vote.

It is obvious that a very substantial amount of staff time is involved in such careful book selection practice, and it is legitimate to ask whether it would be desirable and feasible for a medium-sized library to adopt such a system.
The librarian of library A answered this question in the negative. She questioned, furthermore, that an individual staff member's judgment or even Detroit's committee system can give complete assurance of always making the right decision. She felt that it was most important to have books on the shelf in sufficient quantity right after publication even at the risk of making some mistakes. (Actually, in library A, several staff members review adult books regularly for the Library Journal and, therefore, do have firsthand acquaintance with some of the books that come up for selection.)

The influence of public demand on selection standards will be discussed later.

On the basis of the data obtained, it is difficult to say whether or not the size of the book budget in libraries C, D, and E was responsible for the fact that three of the titles checked were not purchased although the two larger libraries with their considerably greater book funds did purchase them. Libraries D and E had not bought two of the five nonfiction titles from the "Notable Books" list; the two titles in each case were in the field of international affairs: in the case of library D, New Dimensions of Peace, by Chester Bowles, and France Against Herself, by Herbert Luethy; in the case of library E, Wanted: an Asian Policy, by E. O. Reischauer, and China Under Communism, by R. L. Walker. On the other hand, library C with book funds between libraries D and E had bought both of these titles.

John Strachey's Contemporary Capitalism published in 1956 was bought by libraries A and B, but not by libraries C, D, and E. It must be said, though, that it was not listed in the Booklist, and while four reviews quoted in the Book Review Digest were favorable (Kirkus, Library Journal, New Statesman and Nation, and New York Times), four others were mixed (Christian Science Monitor, Nation, New York Herald Tribune and Times Literary Supplement).

Only the checking of a considerably more extensive list of titles in various fields would allow any valid generalization about the influence of the size of the book budget on book selection.

Allocation of Adult Book Funds

Although there were considerable variations in the extent to which adult book funds were allocated specifically, they did not form a consistent pattern. While the largest library, A, went into more specific allocations than any of the others as might be expected, library B, the next largest, did not make any allocations whatsoever. (At the time of the interview, library B had just begun to assemble information on the recurring cost of its subscriptions for reference services and standing orders). As far as is known, prevailing
practice seems to have been on the side of a high degree of flexibility. Myra Simms, in a study of book fund allocations to departments and branch libraries, published in 1946, makes this statement:

"It is not surprising that so few libraries allocate a definite percentage of their book funds to the purchase of specific types of books. Public libraries do not, as a rule, buy books because they are fiction or non-fiction but because the books meet the demands of the patrons of the library or fill a lack in the book collection."

Helen Haines approves of the practice of the "majority of public libraries ... no longer allocating a definite percentage of their book funds to the purchase of specified types of books."

On the other hand, John Henderson, in discussing what a book selection policy statement should cover, indicated in 1955 that it should include a balancing of budget allocations for current popular titles, basic reference titles, local materials on industry and history, and for current and standard publications of general significance. In the recently published revised public library standards, there is the following reference to budget allocations for library materials: "The needs of the various age and interest groups in the community should be reflected in the library's annual budget allocations for resources and in the continuing selection of materials to meet their needs."

It seems likely that the allocation of book funds is closely connected with the consciousness of library objectives a particular library displays. The more explicit a library is about the objectives it wants to reach in its service, the more necessary it would find it to make specific book budget allocations beyond the most common, i.e., adult and juvenile, reference and circulating, and possibly fiction and nonfiction materials. It is also true, however, that even though more specific allocation might be desirable in many cases, it should never be applied rigidly.

Book Selection Standards

The problem of book selection standards came up several times in the interviews: in response to the question on public demand as a factor in selection, on the rental collection and its influence, and in the attempt to elicit information on the specific standards applied in book selection. While there were some minor variations in the attitude of the librarians toward public demand, on the whole a strong inclination to satisfy it even at the expense of lowering standards was evident. In their own formulation of their book selection standards, the librarians were very general and rather vague, and sometimes contradictory. Only one librarian articulated the belief which
lies at the root of the argument over "value versus demand," i.e. that the library as a tax supported institution belongs to the people which gives at least the adults a right to expect to find in the library anything they want to see and read, and that it is somehow "undemocratic" and even an indication of "censorship" if the library does not respond to this demand--regardless of the quality of the material involved.

Some attempt to solve the problems of maintaining standards, particularly in fiction, was evident in the heavy reliance on the rental collection for supplying the most popular material.

Only library A went further by not listing low quality fiction in the catalog (presumably this problem does not arise for nonfiction because selection standards are higher), by having it only in the rental collection for the first four months, and by not taking reserves for it. (Library C bought mysteries only for the rental collection.) Library A's new device of handling some questionable material by way of "review" copies and enlisting the public's cooperation by asking for comments had not been in use long enough to determine whether or not it will have the effect of influencing the library's selection policy. While this is undoubtedly an interesting device, much will depend on how the comments are evaluated; are they going to be weighted by their quality, or is the majority going to win out?

To illustrate the selection policy with regard to "light" fiction, the number of titles of five older authors was checked in each library. Three of the authors--Bailey, Burroughs, and Dell--were not represented in the 1950 Fiction Catalog. Baldwin was represented by one title, and Lincoln by five. A good many titles found in the libraries may have been out of print in 1950. Therefore, earlier editions of the Fiction Catalog were checked with the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Standard Catalog Fiction Section</th>
<th>Fiction Catalog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burroughs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen that, with the exception of Lincoln, these authors were either not represented in the Fiction Catalog at any time, or only with very few titles.
The total number of titles by these five authors ranged from thirty-seven in library D to sixty-nine in libraries A and B. In order to get some data for comparison, information was obtained on holdings in Detroit, Newark, and Enoch Pratt public libraries.

Table III
Number of "Light" Fiction Titles Held

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Detroit Public Library</th>
<th>Newark Public Library</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bailey</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 (branch only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burroughs</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dell</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In Foreign Language Department only (1 title in Hungarian, 1 in Lithuanian, and 2 in Polish).

At the Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore, it was found that the library had no titles by Burroughs, four by Dell, twenty-eight by Baldwin, and quite a number by Bailey and Lincoln. Many of the catalog cards were marked "Not to be replaced," however. None of the five authors appeared in the first part of the Fiction Replacement List issued in December 1956 ("titles for general replacement"); however, in the second part ("titles for limited replacement") four Baldwin titles were listed, three of them in paper editions.

The pertinent part of Enoch Pratt's "Book Selection Policies and Procedures" reads as follows:

"...a substantial number of novels of serious purpose is purchased in preference to many titles of light fiction and adventure. Demand for extra copies of the latter is met to some degree by purchase of paper-covered books. ... In selecting fiction, the Library has set up no arbitrary single standard of literary quality. An attempt is made to satisfy a public varying greatly in formal education, social background and taste, ..."

"Although no single standard of literary quality can be set up, it may be said that the Library's policy is to acquire fiction, whether serious or amusing, realistic or imaginative, which is well written and based on authentic human experience and to exclude weak, incompetent, or cheap sentimental writing, as well as the intentionally sensational, morbid or erotic."15
When asked whether Enoch Pratt would have bought these titles, had they come up for purchase after the adoption of the book selection policy statement in 1950, the answer was "probably not"; but no attempt was made at that time to systematically weed the collection to bring it in line with the policy statement. The point was also made that in the case of the Central Library there might be a tendency to keep these titles as examples of a certain type of fiction.

Detroit's low holdings--except for Lincoln, who, if the Fiction Catalog listings are taken as a criterion, is considered of a little higher quality than the other four authors, anyhow--are not surprising in view of the careful selection procedure described previously. (page 14)

Newark's almost complete lack of holdings--again except for Lincoln is interesting, and only a more detailed study could reveal the reasons. The comment made over the telephone by the head of the Lending and Reference Department which handles fiction at the main library that the books have "probably worn out" is not an adequate explanation since one might expect the same wear and tear in all the libraries--other things being equal.

Controversial Material

The other important aspect of book selection standards is the library's policy in handling controversial material. Two fiction titles which illustrate both the quality standard and the censorship aspect of book selection--and in addition the problem of bestseller pressure--are Peyton Place by Grace Metalious (1956) and Heart in Exile by Rodney Garland (1954). The first title was in four of the libraries, the second in none. Peyton Place was not listed in Booklist, Heart in Exile was; reviews of Peyton Place were either unfavorable or dubious, reviews of Heart in Exile were either entirely favorable or favorable with slight qualifications. The only explanation that can account for purchase in one case, and not in the other, is, on the one hand, the pressure of public demand, and on the other, the fact that Heart in Exile deals with homosexuality, a problem that is still considered taboo in American society, and, therefore, in many libraries.

Another indication of this taboo is a nonfiction title on homosexuality, The Other Man by Donald James West (1956) which, while it was not listed in Booklist, got favorable reviews in American Journal of Public Health, American Sociological Review, New Statesman and Nation, and a highly favorable review in Library Journal (a book selection tool which three of the libraries said they were using). However, only one library had purchased the book.

On the other hand, all the libraries had the two Kinsey titles which may be due in part at least to the amount of publicity these books received at the time of publication.
To move into two other areas of controversy: religion and politics. All the libraries had purchased the two Blanshard titles, and in the one library where a member of the community through a board member had put pressure on the library to remove the two books, this had been resisted successfully.

Four books were published about Senator McCarthy between 1952 and 1954; three of the libraries had all of them, library E with the smallest book budget had all but one, and only library D lacked three of the four titles. Buckley, Gore, and Rorty were listed in the Booklist, Anderson was listed in the Standard Catalog, and Rorty was listed there in a note. Of the four books, McCarthy and His Enemies by William F. Buckley and L. B. Bozell (Regnery, 1954) was the one most favorable to the Senator. The excerpts in the Book Review Digest list one review marked "-" (Saturday Review), none of the other reviews are favorable, and all indicate clearly the pro-McCarthy point of view of the authors. In the description, the phrase "A statement of the case of Senator McCarthy mainly as he himself sees it" is used. The reviews for the other three books are either entirely favorable, or favorable with slight reservations in one or two out of the five to seven reviews listed for each of the three books.

It seems clear that the only conclusion that can be drawn from this record is that in this case library D either exercised censorship or performed --whether intentionally or inadvertently--a poor job of book selection in view of its avowed attempt "to present all sides on a controversial question."

The additional material on McCarthy found in the catalog of library A should be mentioned here particularly in view of the comment made by the librarian that in her opinion many librarians fail to buy material expressing the extremely conservative point of view. The two additional items on McCarthy listed in the catalog were the April 1954, 45th anniversary issue of the magazine The Progressive entitled "McCarthy: a Documented Record," and the phonograph record "The Investigator"--both presenting a very liberal point of view.

Community Characteristics and Needs

It seemed in the interviews that on the whole the librarians were relying on their intuition rather than on some objective method in ascertaining and meeting community interests and needs. There was no evidence that any of the libraries had recently made a systematic community survey although a specific question about this was not asked.
The holdings of labor titles provide an interesting illustration of one aspect of the problem of community characteristics, interests, and needs. Disregarding earlier editions of a title listed, the holdings can be summarized as follows:

- Total number of titles listed and checked: 26
- Number of titles starred in bibliography as more popular material: 12
- Number of titles listed in Booklist (Three additional titles were listed in Booklist in an earlier edition): 9
- Number of titles listed in Standard Catalog for Public Libraries (Two additional titles were listed in Standard Catalog in an earlier edition): 10
- Number of titles listed in ALA Catalog (all published prior to 1949 when the ALA Catalog discontinued): 7
- Total number of titles listed in any of the three sources: 14
- Total number of starred titles listed in any of the three sources: 8

Table IV
Library Holdings of Labor Titles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Number of All Titles</th>
<th>Number of Starred Titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In addition, libraries B and C had earlier editions of one, and library D of two titles listed.

It is obvious and confirms the Leigh findings discussed earlier that the budget determines the relative completeness of library holdings to a considerable extent. Library A with the largest budget—and in the largest community—exceeds by one the number of labor titles listed in any of the three standard sources, and library B with the next largest budget has all but two of these
titles (and exceeds by three and two respectively the titles listed in Book-
list or Standard Catalog).

However, when libraries C, D, and E with considerably smaller total
budgets, and adult book budgets of $7,500 for C, $8,000 for D, and $5,000
for E in 1955 are compared, it is obvious that one or more other factors enter
in. As was said earlier, libraries D and E are located in residential,
high-income communities, whereas library C is in a partly industrial, average-
income community. As the librarian of library C pointed out herself in the
interview, this community characteristic is taken into account in book selection,
and it is therefore not surprising to find that library C in spite of a considerably
lower book budget than A and B comes very close to their holdings (with eleven
titles in all, and nine of the starred ones).

Turning to libraries D and E, the situation is quite different. It is
interesting to note that library E in a smaller community and with only a
little more than 60 per cent of the book budget of library D, owns six of
the titles as compared with only two in D. (It should be added that one of the
titles found in library D is part of the Reference Shelf which most libraries
get by subscription). The question now arises whether in such homogeneous,
high-income communities as D and E two or six titles respectively represent
adequate coverage of material on the labor movement.

At this point there are some interesting comments in the literature. The
Post-War Standards for Public Libraries had this to say:

"Book selection for the public library should aim at meeting
reading needs common to all communities as well as the specific
needs of each community. The book stock of any library is satis-
factory to the extent that both of these goals are realized.

"This principle holds that every library should provide books on
topics of general concern, as well as on topics of major interest to
the particular community. Certain subjects should be represented in
all libraries, e.g., matters pertaining to the national welfare..."16

Helen Haines makes some statements in her book which might appear
contradictory. On the one hand she says: "Even a small public library... can give fair proportional representation to labor literature in its book
selection..."17 On the other hand, she gives the following as one of the
fundamental principles in book selection: "Avoid selection of books for which
no demand is evident..."18 And finally, as another of these principles which
may or may not seem applicable in this case, depending on one's point of view:
"Keep abreast of the changing currents of thought and opinion, and give
adequate representation to the scientific, social, and intellectual forces that
are reshaping the modern world."19
Many people would undoubtedly say that the organized labor movement, particularly during the last twenty-five years, has been a social force of considerable influence on the social fabric of the United States and should, therefore, find adequate representation in any public library in whatever community. It is difficult to say what would represent "adequate" representation in this case. But since the Booklist is intended primarily for small and medium-sized libraries, it would seem that the nine to twelve titles—if the earlier editions are added—might be a fair yardstick.

Whether the low holdings of libraries D and E indicate a mistaken notion of book selection for community needs and interests, or censorship—particularly in the case of library D where the community is presumably "anti-union"—is difficult to say without further evidence.

Some Tentative Conclusions

As discussed in the introduction, the following are considered the most important aspects of public library book selection, and, therefore, of any good book selection policy statement:

1. Public Library objectives, both generally and locally
2. Quality standards
3. Community characteristics, needs, and interests
4. Censorship, or, put positively, Freedom to Read.

Quality Standards

It is quite evident from the findings discussed that quality standards, particularly in fiction, are not maintained under the pressure of public demand and the emphasis put on speed of service (pre-publication ordering without examination or appraisal of books). Again, Miss Haines has made several statements on this point, some of which seem to justify the practices described.

There are a few libraries which have taken the drastic step of adopting the same high quality standards for all parts of their collection. In 1938, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh ceased to buy novels which had no merit except as entertainment. And Lowell A. Martin states in his article surveying twenty-five years of "Library Service to Adults" in 1955:

"Some libraries have over the years progressively eliminated less substantial fiction from purchase lists, starting hesitatingly with a few of the sentimental authors no longer in regular demand and gaining confidence as the reaction to each step proved less violent.
than expected, to the point where certain libraries can now justifiably maintain that they stock only the better items of the current fiction output."

None of the libraries visited were ready for such a radical reversal of their current policy; as a matter of fact, one of the librarians would consider it "censorship." While some of the other libraries tried to solve the problem by relying heavily on the rental collection for this material, only library A had gone as far as not cataloging or accepting reserves for it, and making it available only in the rental collection for the first four months after publication. (An interesting report on "Best-Seller Pressure and its Influence on Public Library Book Selection" was made by W. S. Haugh, City Librarian of Bristol, England, as a result of a survey of Bristol's Reservation Service in 1952 which brought about a policy change to the effect that, except for student requests, new books cannot be reserved until twelve months after the date of publication. This policy change is suggestive.)

While it is true that library A's handling of "light" fiction represents a purely pragmatic approach to the problem (the principle involved in terms of the official public library objectives will be discussed below), it is a step in the right direction and may be one which other librarians can be persuaded to emulate while they are not ready to go as far as Pittsburgh.

Community Characteristics and Needs

In the book selection literature references to the importance of community characteristics, interests, and needs in building the book collection abound. But the question might well be asked: what has this meant in the practice of book selection on the local level?

The National Plan for Public Library Service indicated the need for a community survey. In his paper "Community Analysis for the Library" given at the 1943 University of Chicago Library Institute, Martin put it this way:

"To guide book-selection policies. -- The aim of community analysis in this connection is to determine reading interests. In its most obvious aspects this means, for example, the provision of garden books in an area of homeowners and not in an apartment-hotel area. . . Perhaps more than in any other area book selection requires the working insight of librarianship to integrate and supplement the fragmentary information provided by statistics of social characteristics."
In her discussion of community interests and needs and their meaning for library book selection, Miss Haines urges the librarian to familiarize himself with all "cultural and racial elements" in the population. She mentions particularly the various nationality groups and the Negro population. She also refers to active cooperation between the library and all educational agencies in the community, the local newspapers, and organized labor; and she finally stresses that the librarian must have a "cross-sectional knowledge of the community."

In addition, there are repeated references to two kinds of community needs, e.g. in Grace T. Stevenson's words:

"The collection must meet two kinds of needs of the community, those which are expressed, and those which are basic and universal whether expressed or not. The books which meet expressed needs are borrowed and read whether or not the library provides any encouragement. The librarian must also spend money for those books which meet a basic universal need, but in which his patrons may have expressed little interest. If he does not buy them, he has killed at its source the library's part in the possible development of the skilled and discriminating reader."

If the libraries visited can be taken as fairly representative—and probably in some respects they are considerably above the average—of medium-sized public libraries, there is very little evidence of any systematic attempt to ascertain community characteristics, interests, and needs. The large Negro population in two of the communities did not seem reflected in any way in the libraries' book selection. It is well known that even in the North Negroes use the public library less than white people—this is true at least for adults. While this is due to the lower level of formal education attained by the Negro population, particularly in the older age groups, it seems desirable for public libraries to make a special effort to reach this part of the community, and an appropriate book selection policy would be one way of approaching this problem.

In the provision of material on the labor movement, two of the libraries did not show much awareness of the library's responsibility for meeting the "unexpressed" needs of the community mentioned above.

What seems to be lacking in the literature is a spelling out of what meeting both the expressed and the universal needs of the community means in concrete terms. Some case studies with actual examples of subject areas and their coverage, and possibly even some specific titles, might fill a real need in helping librarians to bridge the gap between this aspect of book selection theory and their day-to-day practice.
This study does not provide sufficient data to support even very tentative conclusions in the area of self-censorship in book selection. The very incomplete and one-sided holdings on Senator McCarthy and the lack of titles on the labor movement by library D may represent censorship, or they may represent poor book selection practice. The number of titles dealing with homosexuality (one fiction, one nonfiction) was too small to support the theory that most libraries apply three sets of standards in fiction, depending on whether it is innocuous, deals with sex to a considerable extent, or deals with any form of unorthodox sex.

Book Selection and Public Library Objectives

What does all this mean in terms of the official public library objectives, as outlined on page 2? Looking at the problem of book selection standards historically, it is clear that the educational versus the recreational function of the public library, and the "value" versus "demand" theory of book selection have contended with one another at almost every period. The importance of high quality standards for the book collection was stressed in the Post-War Standards in 1943 and in the National Plan in 1948. And in 1956, the revised Standards put it this way:

"Materials acquired should meet high standards of quality in content, expression, and format.

"The library continually seeks the best materials to serve purposes and needs. Factual accuracy, effective expression, significance of subject, sincerity and responsibility of opinion -- these and other factors must be considered and at times balanced one against the other... Quality of materials must be related to the other two basic standards of selection, purpose and need." (While the last sentence is open to more than one interpretation, it is assumed here--in the light of the tenor of the whole document and the personnel of the Committee--that it is not meant to qualify the first part of the statement.)

But as the Public Library Inquiry found, and as is confirmed by the practices reported in this study, actual book selection in many, and probably in most public libraries, does not come close to the officially pronounced objectives and standards. Leigh sums up the findings of the Inquiry as follows:

"Inability to meet the requirements set up by the official library objectives is not owing entirely to limited size and budgets. It is also a reflection of the ideas of those in charge of library policy, and these seem to vary with different types of material... with regard to books the public library policy in many places is not clearly
distinguished from commercial book distribution. There is a duplication of, in smaller libraries an emphasis on, current, ephemeral fiction and nonfiction. It is difficult to justify such an emphasis in terms of the official library objectives."

Two additional points which have not been mentioned so far should be discussed. One was expressed, interestingly enough, by Ralph Munn, director of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (mentioned above as a library with high quality standards for fiction), in his Summary of the conference of the Forum on the Public Library Inquiry, held at the University of Chicago in 1949:

"Few of us would question the circulation of substandard books for entertainment use if there were also funds for the full development of the more serious and significant functions. We know that in most libraries there are not adequate funds; usually one or the other must be neglected." 

The other point is concerned with an argument which has gone on not only in library, but also in general adult education circles for a long time; it maintains that you have to take people where they are and try to lead them to higher quality material, whether it be books or adult education courses.

If the continued demand for low quality fiction is any indication, there does not seem to be much evidence to support this position. This is not to deny that, occasionally, there may be such improvement in the quality of books read in the case of some individuals, particularly where a library has a highly qualified staff and puts a great deal of emphasis on readers' advisory service, whether formally set up or not. However, on the whole the patrons looking for bestsellers and similar material are very likely not to have much, if any, contact with professional librarians--particularly in libraries where the charging of books is done by the clerical staff. Therefore, until libraries are willing and able to test this theory by directing the work of the professional staff towards a much more concerted effort of improving the reading level of the substandard fiction fans, this argument for lowering library book selection standards must be rejected as a rationalization.

As for Munn's point, that if all libraries just had sufficient funds to perform adequately both an educational and an entertainment function, few librarians would question the circulation of substandard books, this seems highly debatable in view of the official public library objectives. As a matter of fact, the letter sent to the librarians with the statement of objectives included the following question: "Do the current official objectives definitely reject the idea that the library should, within budgetary limits, supply whatever the public demands or asks for?" Leigh reports that "twenty-four thought that they clearly implied such rejection; twenty-seven agreed that they did, but that
in practice compromises are necessary." 34 There were only twelve librarians
(the largest number of dissenters on any point) who considered the objectives
wrong and impractical if they did not include provision of what the public wants.
And Leigh concludes:

"In the official objectives there is no mention of the terms 'entertainment,
amusement,' and 'escape.' Recreation is given a strict meaning--
what is re-creative--but it obviously includes current fiction which falls
within this meaning of the term as well as publications which serve the
purposes of enlightenment." 34

A few of the comments quoted by Leigh from the replies of the minority
who disagreed with the official statement of public library objectives are
similar to the opinion of one of the librarians interviewed, i.e. that it is
"undemocratic," and even an indication of "censorship" if the library does not
respond to public demand. However, it is implicit in the concept of the public
library as an educational institution that it sets and maintains quality standards
in its book selection and other activities. Would it ever occur to the spokesmen
for this line of thought to apply it to tax supported colleges and universities
by suggesting that the curriculum be based on public demand rather than on
sound educational objectives? And if not, does that mean that they do not
believe in the educational function of the public library?

All that has been said lends strong support to the hypothesis stated in the
Introduction, i.e. that most librarians have very ambivalent feelings toward
quality standards in book selection. The following quotation from a paper given
by B. R. Berelson at the Forum on the Public Library Inquiry expresses this
ambivalence very well:

"On the one hand, public librarians have a set of actual objectives which
have developed historically, which have been accepted traditionally, and
which have been expressed in practice. They may not always be articu-
lated--indeed, it is their peculiar province not to be--but they are none-
theless there as guides for a whole range of library activities,... Then,
on the other hand, there is a group of professed objectives, skillfully
formulated by official bodies, which express the higher aspirations for
professional service. When a request for objectives is made, they are
brought forward. Thus, just as many lawyers will tell you that their
objective is to see justice done, whereas they are actually out to win
cases, so many librarians will tell you that education is their objective,
when they are busy trying to increase circulation." 35

If this interpretation is correct, it now becomes clear why so few li-
braries, and practically no medium-sized and small ones, have adopted
written book selection policy statements although the need for such statements
has been stated so persuasively and authoritatively. The formulation of a written policy statement would force many librarians to face the "split between the professed and the practiced objectives" stated by Berelson, and to make a compromise between the two.

Looking at it this way, it becomes apparent that the adoption of a written book selection policy statement—while desirable—should be regarded in its proper perspective, i.e. as part of the larger problem of bringing book selection practices closer to the official statement of public library objectives. This need for bridging the gap between the "professed and the practiced objectives" exists in many areas of library service, e.g. in adult education and library cooperation, to name just a few and it is much easier to diagnose than to prescribe a cure for it. The following suggestions are made in the full realization that they may, at best, be just the beginning steps in moving toward a solution.

As was mentioned earlier, book selection was considered as a fruitful object of further intensive study by the Public Library Inquiry; the effect of "centralized" selection on the quality of the collection, on staff morale, etc., was singled out as a promising subject for further research. There are, however, several other problems in this area which could well be studied with benefit. One is the quality of library holdings which order all or most of their books pre-publication, compared with libraries which select books on the basis of staff examination and review. The results of such a study would be most revealing if libraries could be compared that were similar with regard to book budget, size of staff, etc. Criteria for the quality of the collection should include both high quality and low quality material.

It might also be valuable to make a comparative study of the quality of the book collection in libraries which have adopted a book selection policy statement and some libraries without such a statement, but alike in other respects.

In addition, the publication of some case studies of libraries maintaining high quality standards in all parts of their collection including a fairly detailed description of how they went about making the change (i.e. eliminating substandard material) might serve as a helpful example to other libraries contemplating a new policy. Also, as far as relating book selection to community characteristics, interests and needs is concerned, the experience of the A.L.A. Library-Community Project should yield some specific illustrations of what is involved.

Ruth Gregory's excellent paper "Principles Behind a Book Selection Policy Statement" which appeared in the October, 1956, issue of the I.L.A. Record, deserves a wider audience and might well serve as the basis for discussion. It is to be hoped that one or another of the uses she suggests for a policy
statement will give food for thought to other librarians and move them into action:

"The statement can be used in many ways. It is most useful for clarification, guidance, and the stimulation of those who are actually engaged in book selection... The statement is of particular value as an educational device for orienting new personnel in the library's policy and standards of book selection.

"The policy is also useful in discussions with the citizen who thinks the library's standards are too high or too low. He may have a point if he doesn't want to restrict the rights of others. The citizen is never without the right to talk about books and the effect of the books in his own library. He also has a right to sound answers to his questions. The source of these answers could be the selection policy statement.

"The statement is also valuable in dealing with groups who think they know what is poison print for other people."

Finally, it might be worth-while to follow up the 1955 Book Selection Work Conference at Philadelphia with similar conferences or workshops on the regional, state, and local level. It is to be hoped that the relevant parts of the revised, 1956 Standards will continue to be used at such conferences and workshops as well as in library education.

"Materials should be selected, retained, and discarded in the light of conscious objectives of each library.
"...each library should define and refine the objectives which it seeks to achieve with its resources. These aims should be as specific as possible. Most libraries must define aims toward which they will build their collection, or aims will be defined for them by default in what they fail to acquire...
"Every library should have a written statement of policy, covering the selection and maintenance of its collection of books and nonbook materials."

In this way it might be possible to gradually narrow the gap between the professed and the practiced library objectives in the area of book selection, and, thereby, bring the public library closer to performing its function as a truly educational institution.
Appendix A
Holdings of Titles*


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arnow</td>
<td>The Dollmaker</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basso</td>
<td>The View from Pompey's Head</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellow</td>
<td>Adventures of Augie March</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gouzenko</td>
<td>Fall of a Titan</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markandaya</td>
<td>Nectar in a Sieve</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michener</td>
<td>Bridges of Toko-ri</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paton</td>
<td>Too Late the Phalarope</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richter</td>
<td>Light in the Forest</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneider</td>
<td>Pail of Oysters</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uris</td>
<td>Battle Cry</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young</td>
<td>A Good Man</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. "Notable Books" Nonfiction, 1955 (Selected Titles)

Public Affairs - Domestic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barth</td>
<td>Government by Investigation</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Voto</td>
<td>The Easy Chair</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fromm</td>
<td>Sane Society</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>The Supreme Court in the American System of Government</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>How Far the Promised Land?</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Affairs - International

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowles</td>
<td>New Dimensions of Peace</td>
<td>x x x o x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunther</td>
<td>Inside Africa</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luethy</td>
<td>France Against Herself</td>
<td>x x x o x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reischauer</td>
<td>Wanted: an Asian Policy</td>
<td>x x x x o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker</td>
<td>China under Communism</td>
<td>x x x x o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*x - Found in Library
o - Not found in Library
### Libraries

#### c. Controversial Nonfiction Titles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blanshard</td>
<td>American Freedom and Catholic Power</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanshard</td>
<td>Communism, Democracy and Catholic Power</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinsey</td>
<td>Sexual Behavior in the Human Male</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinsey</td>
<td>Sexual Behavior in the Human Female</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>McCarthy: the Man, the Senator, the &quot;Ism&quot;</td>
<td>x x x o x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckley</td>
<td>McCarthy and His Enemies</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gore</td>
<td>Joe Must Go</td>
<td>x x o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rorty</td>
<td>McCarthy and the Communists</td>
<td>x x o o x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velikovsky</td>
<td>Worlds in Collision</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### d. Three 1956 Nonfiction Titles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angoff</td>
<td>H. L. Mencken</td>
<td>x x x o x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strachey</td>
<td>Contemporary Capitalism</td>
<td>x x o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>The Other Man</td>
<td>o x o o o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### e. Three Recent Fiction Titles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garland</td>
<td>Heart in Exile</td>
<td>o o o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalious</td>
<td>Peyton Place</td>
<td>* x o x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway**</td>
<td>Beyond the Black Stump</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### f. Sample Holdings of Older Low-Quality Fiction

(Number of Titles Held)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Holdings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bailey, Temple</td>
<td>16 6 13 7 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin, Faith</td>
<td>15 20 14 12 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burroughs, Edgar Rice</td>
<td>0 11 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dell, Ethel</td>
<td>0 2 6 0 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln, Joseph C.</td>
<td>38 30 33 18 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td>69 69 66 37 51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* "Review copy" as discussed on page 8.
** Nevil Shute, pseud.
### Books on the Labor Movement

(Starred titles are more popular material)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Austin, Aleine. The Labor Story.</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>x x x o x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Barbash, Jack. Labor Unions in Action.</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>x x x o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloom, Gordon and Herbert R. Northrup. Economics of Labor Relations. rev. ed.</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>o o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Colton, Samuel, ed. Sagas of Struggle; a Labor Anthology.</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>o x x o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commons, John R. et al. History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932. 4v.</td>
<td>1918,1935</td>
<td>x o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Dankert, Clyde E. An Introduction to Labor.</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>o o o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daugherty, Carroll R. and John B. Parrish. The Labor Problems of American Society.</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>x x o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Dulles, Foster R. Labor in America. rev. ed.</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>x b b b b x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Faulkner, Harold U. and Mark Starr. Labor in America. rev. ed.</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>x o x o x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Galenson, Walter, et al. Comparative Labor Movements.</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>o o o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Hardman, J. B. S., ed. House of Labor.</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>x x x x o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor in Post War America.</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>o o o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorwin, Lewis. The American Federation of Labor.</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>x o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorwin, Lewis. The International Labor Movement.</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>x x x o x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorwin, Val. R. The French Labor Movement.</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>o o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Marx, Herbert L. American Labor Unions.</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>x x x x x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millis, Harry A. and Royal Montgomery. Economics of Labor. 3v.</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>o x o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Northrup, Herbert R. Organized Labor and the Negro.</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>o x x o o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Libraries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*a* In libraries C and E time ran out before all the titles could be checked in the catalog. The fourteen titles in library C and the ten titles in library E which are not marked, were, however, all checked in the shelflist and not found. Since eight of the unmarked titles for library C, and five of them for library E were not found in the two larger libraries A and B either, and since four and three titles respectively were found in only one of the larger libraries, it seems safe to say that in all likelihood none of the unchecked titles actually were in libraries C and E. This is given additional support by the fact that the librarians of libraries C and E looked at the list and did not recognize any of these titles as among their holdings.

### g. Books on the Labor Movement - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title, Details</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perlman, Selig</td>
<td>A History of Trade Unionism in the United States. 1950.</td>
<td>A B C D E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Peterson, Florence</td>
<td>American Labor Unions. 1952</td>
<td>x x x a x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schwarz, Solomon M.</td>
<td>Labor in the Soviet Union. 1952</td>
<td>x x o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seidman, Joel</td>
<td>American Labor from Defense to Reconversion. 1953.</td>
<td>x o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seidman, Joel</td>
<td>Union Rights and Union Duties. 1943</td>
<td>x x x o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sturmthal, Adolf F.</td>
<td>Unity and Diversity in European Labor. 1953.</td>
<td>o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Taft, Philip</td>
<td>The Structure and Government of Labor Unions. 1954.</td>
<td>x o x o o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aLibrary D had the 1945 edition.*
FOOTNOTES


4. Ibid., p. iii.


6. Ibid., p. 16.

7. Ibid., p. 22.


Post-War Standards for Public Libraries. Chicago, The Association, 
1943, p. 68.


18. Ibid., p. 41.

19. Ibid., p. 42.

20. Ibid., pp. 42, 527-529.

21. Pittsburgh, Carnegie Library. Adult Book Selection Policies and 
Procedures. (Mimeographed) 1954.

1955.

23. Haugh, W. S.: Best-Seller Pressure and Its Influence on Public Library 


25. Martin, Lowell: Community Analysis for the Library. In: Carnovksy, 
Leon, and Martin, Lowell, eds.: The Library in the Community. Chicago, 


27. Stevenson, Grace T.: The Role of the Public Library in Adult Reading. 
In: National Society for the Study of Education. Adult Reading, 55th 
Yearbook, part II. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 117.

Wilson, L. R., ed.: The Practice of Book Selection. Chicago, University 
of Chicago Press, 1940, pp. 3-4.


34. Leigh, op. cit., ref. 5, pp. 22-23.


* * * * * * *

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