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University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library Large-scale Digitization Project, 2007.
Public Libraries in France

by James C. McIntosh

Administrative Assistant,
Business and Economic Department
Enoch Pratt Free Public Library

I. From the Revolution to the end of World War II

While twenty-five to thirty-seven public libraries existed in the provinces of France prior to the Revolution of 1789, most French municipal libraries find their origin in the Revolutionary decree of November 2, 1789, which declared that all the possessions of the clergy, including their libraries, was national property.

Historically, more than thirteen years elapsed before the municipalities acquired the church collections expropriated by the momentous decree of 1789. By the authority of a law of October 25, 1795, the collections were installed in the controversial, short-lived Ecoles Centrales, where they were generally available for public use at given hours each week. After Napoleon suppressed the Ecoles Centrales on May 2, 1802, their collections were placed at the disposition of library-minded municipalities by a ministerial order of January 28, 1803. The state did not cede title to the books, but entrusted them to the municipalities upon the simple conditions that each city provide a location and pay a librarian. It is estimated that at least 7,000,000 volumes were confided to the cities' care.4

It is worth examining at this point the circumstances in which, amid revolutionary fervor, the great bulk of French municipal libraries were founded; their early status; and the nature of their collections.

That pervasive thing known as "civic pride" which the French call "esprit de clocher" prompted town fathers of even the smallest municipalities to demand book collections as soon as they heard of the consular decree of January 28. Generally speaking, each municipality received the collections formerly belonging to nearby convents and monasteries. Hence, the importance of a municipal collection bears little relation to the size of the city, or to the intellectual curiosity of its inhabitants. A city of insignificant size and indifferent intellectual pretensions often was favored with a library of great wealth merely because of its proximity to an important monastery.
But if civic pride sufficed to gain an important book and manuscript collection, something more was necessary to maintain and develop it. The small towns usually lacked the interest and the funds to house their collections properly and to pay competent librarians. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that in the course of a century, countless thousands of rare books and manuscripts were lost through sheer neglect. According to Jean Gautier, more treasures were lost through negligence after 1800 than were destroyed during the strife of the Revolution itself.

Gautier describes graphically the dismal fate of so many of these precious collections during the post-Revolutionary years. Of a Brest library containing some 25,000 volumes in 1796, an inspector found not a trace in 1840. At Poitiers, it became necessary to convert the library into a classroom. The prefect, in cooperation with the mayor, organized a sale of the 12 to 13,000 items in the library in 1804. Folio-size volumes were sold for three sous apiece, while volumes of other format were disposed of for one sou, six deniers each. A local resident bought the whole collection for 3,000 francs.

Many cities freely used the deposits as sources for prizes in the lycées and collèges.

The following letter dated August 7, 1816, and written by the Sub-Prefect of Civray to the Prefect of Vienne indicates the degree of respect accorded these revolutionary deposits in some quarters:

Monsieur le Comte, il existe dans un local de cette commune quelques vieux livres provenant de diverses maisons religieuses qui sont dévorés par la poussière et dont la vente pourrait peut-être produire une somme de 100 à 120 francs, qui s'emploieraient utilement à l'achat de quelques meubles nécessaires à l'usage de la sous-préfecture. Je sais que le domaine pourrait, à la rigueur, avoir prise sur ce modique objet, mais il en ignore et en a toujours ignoré l'existence, et; comme j'ai eu l'honneur de vous le dire, il s'agit tout au plus de 100 à 120 francs. Ces livres sont dans un état de vétusté qui permet seulement de les vendre à poids; vous pouvez juger de leur valeur. Je vous prie de vouloir bien me faire connaître s'il y aurait de l'inconvénient à faire cette misérable vente au profit de la sous-préfecture. Veuillez, etc....

Most French public libraries, then, had a common origin in the Revolutionary laws, and experienced in common a period of neglect during their early history. They shared yet a third attribute that contributed greatly to their early neglect and historic inability to serve more than small segments of their potential publics. In large part, each collection consisted of theological tomes, works of science, and local histories. It is understandable that civic pride in the acquisition of a library gave way to indifference when titles were examined. Scholarly collections of religious communities were ill-adapted to render significant service to the citizens of municipalities to which they had been transferred.
A tragedy of French librarianship lies in the fact that these "fonds anciens" have remained the principal portions of too many municipal libraries from revolutionary times to our own. A visitor, amazed at the number of volumes possessed by the library of a typical, small French city, too often learns that up to 90% of the books form part of the Revolutionary legacy. Little-used to begin with, the "fonds anciens" have become deadweight, occupying valuable space, serving virtually no one, objects at once of pride, even veneration--and neglect. Numberless treasures even now slowly disintegrate in small towns throughout France--frequently uncataloged and unknown to scholars. Logically, the collections should be regrouped into regional centers where they might be cataloged and made accessible to researchers. 7

Although religious houses constituted the single most important source of accessions, the personal libraries of the nobles were also nationalized and placed at the disposition of the provincial public libraries by decrees of 1792. But since the Revolution, the libraries have added to their collections in more prosaic ways: through gifts of personal libraries from local citizens; important, if irregular, contributions by the national government; and purchases from municipal funds.

The general state of lethargy in which French public libraries remained during most of the nineteenth century was disturbed only by occasional ministerial orders pertaining to reorganization. Toward 1830, libraries began to be treated primarily as facilities for historical study, and less as instruments for the development of popular education, as they were conceived during the Revolution. 8 The libraries, by the very nature of their collections, lent themselves readily to the new orientation.

This swing away from the Revolutionary concept of the public libraries' mission under the July monarchy, is illustrated by the fact that of some twenty-four municipal libraries founded in the nineteenth century, eleven were opened during the period 1830-1848, and all eleven had scholarly rather than popular characteristics. 8

The whole period, in fact, was marked by a revived interest in historical studies. The change in direction of the municipal libraries was only one aspect of this interest which also brought about the founding of the Ecole des Chartes in 1821, as a center for the training of archivists-paleographers. 9 Such renowned historians and scholars as Cousin, Guizot, and Thiers exerted great influence as ministers under Louis Philippe.

An ordinance of October 11, 1832, for the first time provided for the uniform organization of public libraries, placing them under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Education, (now the Ministry of National Education) and another of February 22, 1839, gave French public libraries their first charter.
The decree of July 1, 1897, modifying the ordinance of 1839, attempted to clarify and define the usages which had developed in almost a century of public library experience. The law provided for the "classification" of a number of libraries, that is, the designation of certain libraries having notable collections as historical monuments.

Whose right it was to choose municipal librarians had long been controversial. The ordinance of 1839 gave the choice of librarians to the Minister of Public Education. But the practice was soon abandoned, and prefects seem later to have had the power of selection. The decree of 1897 resolved the matter by recognizing the right of the mayors to name all librarians. This right was qualified by the stipulation that any appointment to a classified library (these numbered forty at the time) was to be made from among the available archivists-paleographers, the graduates of the Ecole des Chartes, or others who had passed a special examination as outlined in Article six of the decree.

As public library deficiencies persisted during the latter half of the nineteenth century, educational leaders began to look elsewhere for means to bring books to the masses.

An early and controversial attempt to meet the reading needs of the French people is to be found in the Bibliotheques Populaires. These lending libraries were sometimes municipal ventures, and as such were accorded grudging official support. More often, such groups as the Ligue Francaise de l'Enseignement, founded in 1866, rendered assistance, and the "populaires" limped along, staffed by volunteers, open very few hours a week, located in dreary quarters in back streets. "Their meager collections, almost always bound with black cloth, generally consisted of novels to which were added a few miscellaneous works, more expensive, received usually as bequests or gifts."

Eugène Morel of the Bibliothèque Nationale, who long led the good fight for modernized public library service in France, understood the unwholesome philosophy at the bottom of the founding of the "populaires," and denounced the snobism inherent in the concept that separate libraries should serve the common people, while the municipal libraries were reserved to the "savants." In his incisive way, Morel expressed the truth, borne out by the passing of time, that such a negative and essentially sterile philosophy could lead to no progress. He declared: "La France n'aura de bibliothèques que quand elle cessera d'avoir des populaires."

As a matter of fact, a number of the "populaires" still exist, mute reminders of Morel's prophecy. One at St. Omer is an official annex of the municipal library, while others at Fécamp and Calais are independent.
Another lending library experiment took the form of school collections. By ministerial orders of June 1, 1862, and December 15, 1915, every primary school was required to maintain a library open to students, former students, their parents, and members of groups similar to our parent-teachers associations. Both national and local government agencies occasionally made contributions to the book stocks. The laws are still in effect, but the collections long since ceased to serve any real purpose. In 1939, only 46,000 of the 75,000 schools actually had such libraries, and most of these existed only in name, or possessed an insignificant number of volumes, generally in poor condition. As unsatisfactory as they were, they often constituted the single source of books in small towns and rural villages.

Before proceeding to brighter periods of public librarianship in France, it may be pertinent at this point to catalog, in terms of books, staffs, budgets, and deeply entrenched traditions, the weaknesses alluded to above, with a view to better appreciating the formidable obstacles which have hampered efforts to modernize and democratize French libraries.

Attention has already been drawn to the "fonds anciens" which form the major portions still of so many public library collections. The national government assists in the modernization of collections through book gifts and funds earmarked for book buying, but book purchases on a local level have always been minimized by action of the government. Because political administration is highly centralized, local governmental units enjoy limited taxing powers; hence, municipal budgets (and therefore, book budgets) are modest. Book funds in the smaller cities are, in truth, little more than nominal, although the libraries of such provincial capitals as Le Havre and Rouen, it should be recognized, are able to maintain living collections through very careful selection practices.

The cities have also been remiss in the provision of adequate buildings. Their only concrete obligation is to provide space. Therefore, unless there is present an unusual amount of civic pride, or unless a municipality places great store by its library, there has too often been little inclination to furnish more than very modest quarters, covering the law. Lille presents the most glaring example of civic indifference to its library. The Lille library building, destroyed in World War I, has not yet been rebuilt. This important public library has been housed for some thirty-five years in a corner of the university library. A lending library annex was established after World War II and is located separately.

Cities have been notoriously reluctant, also, to employ sufficient professional personnel. The employment of qualified librarians is required only in classified libraries. Elsewhere there has been an understandable tendency to shop around for the cheapest help. Frequently, totally unqualified city employees have been assigned to the library. With the decree of July 20, 1931, the state began to contribute a share of the salaries of the head librarians of the classified libraries.
Where graduates of the Ecole des Chartes were named (and until recently, the Chartists had almost a monopoly on classified library positions) technical and intellectual management of the libraries was certain to be of the highest order. But Chartists were and are first of all scholars, archivists-paleographers, primarily drawn to historical research. Only coincidentally have they shown interest in developing the public library as an institution of popular learning. Theirs has been the anachronistic tradition of the librarian in his office, and the reader in the reading room—both safely insulated from each other by a clerk who enforces the rules, fetches the books, and answers questions.

Evidence of educational accomplishment or professional status was once a nearly universal, and is still a common, prerequisite to library use. And if the lack of educational credentials barred one large portion of the public from full use of the "public" libraries, yearly fees exacted for borrowing privileges effectively discouraged another group.

An understanding of the pervasiveness of this undemocratic atmosphere in traditional French librarianship is essential if one is to evaluate properly the magnitude of recent progress. Only after one has confronted three 2 x 2' signs in a single small "salle de lecture" reading, "Do not touch the books," is one likely to attach just importance to the vital spirit of democratic service to all the people which permeates the operation of the new central lending libraries.

One has first to weigh the haughty phrase, "novels excluded," found in the description of one municipal library in,15 "Bibliothèques des départements," against the fact that there exists no other public book-lending service in the city, before one can comprehend the revolutionary change in thinking represented by the single line: "Telephone reference requests invited," in the Bottin directory for the Le Havre Public Library.

Much of the period between two disastrous wars is cynically termed the "era of ministerial promises" in French library circles, but the twenty-year interregnum was marked by several encouraging developments. The American Committee for the Devastated Regions of France is still warmly remembered for its work in transplanting American library service ideals to French soil. A number of cities began to give greater consideration to the provision of books for home reading, and at the same time, several experiments, local in origin, were made to bring books to rural readers. By 1937-38, the Ministry of National Education was adding a considerable number of francs to promises, and in October, 1938, a bookmobile service began operating in the Marne Department, with state assistance.

World War I wrought heavy destruction in the northern French department of the Aisne. Here the American committee concentrated its reconstruction activities, and through its libraries furnished tangible evidence of the potentialities of modern library service. Five public libraries open to children and adults were established in the war-ravaged cities of Soissons, Vic-sur-Aisne, Blérancourt, Anizy and Coucy. These
centers were quartered in temporary "baraquements" and served not only the residents of the towns in which they were located, but managed to provide seventy-five rural villages with revolving book collections. Miss Jessie Carson, of the New York Public Library, organized the libraries and trained young French people to administer them.

Eventually the libraries were turned over to their respective municipalities. The "Bibliothèque Circulante de l'Aisne," (Traveling Library of the Aisne), as the rural system was called, by 1933 became an official association, and presented the formula for future and extended rural services. It is not excessive to say that the genesis of the post-World War II system of departmental extension libraries is to be found in the work of the American committee.

Unfortunately, the Aisne bookmobile service suffered a lack of funds in the same year it achieved official status, and by 1936 was serving only thirty-four villages. Some twenty-two of these contributed to the over-all budget, either through official appropriations or private gifts.

Attending the opening of the American committee's largest library in the Aisne, at Soissons, on Easter in 1921, were Eugène Morel and Ernest Coyecque, then general inspector of libraries for Paris and the Department of the Seine. To both, the Soissons center epitomized the kind of library they hoped would one day be commonplace in France. Their regret that this library was so far from Paris, where it could serve as an example to be visited and imitated, was evident.

Miss Carson also understood the importance of creating a model library in the French capitol, and soon apprised Coyecque of the American committee's readiness to offer Paris a library similar to that at Soissons, and to assume the expenses during the first year. The library, replacing an antiquated, little-used book collection in rue Fessart, was opened on November 13, 1922, and was turned over to the city in January 1924. In the meantime, the American committee supplied books, furniture, and staff. The Minister of the Liberated Regions furnished the "baraque", and the City of Paris provided the land, 10,000 francs, and accepted the costs of upkeep during the first year. The rue Fessart branch was an unqualified success, and by 1933 the temporary structure had been replaced by a permanent building.

The origin of the children's library movement in France can be traced to the opening in Paris of the now famous "Heure Joyeuse," in November 1924. Children's libraries all over France are known by this name, which literally translated, means "happy hour". While the American committee had provided books for adults and children alike in its Aisne libraries, the Latin Quarter center was the first to be entirely dedicated to service to children. The American Book Committee on Children's Libraries sponsored the Heure Joyeuse, "as it had the one opened in Brussels in 1920, and the conditions attached to its opening were analogous to those which had applied to the organization of the rue Fessart branch.
From its inception the Paris Heure Joyeuse has exemplified the highest type of children's library service. Marguerite Gruny, the director, received her training at the American Library School in Paris, and has exerted strong and salutary influence toward the development of children's libraries throughout the country.

At the outbreak of World War II, about a score of children's libraries existed in France. There are now some fifty, including thirteen in Paris. It must be stated that a number of these are no more than "coins", or corners in adult libraries, with small collections of juvenile books, and most are really only book-lending facilities. Few of the libraries utilize American techniques, i.e. story hours, projects, practice in the use of the catalog, etc., because of the lack of trained personnel.

Growth of children's libraries has been retarded by a number of factors: the concept is still relatively new, and has not achieved full acceptance from all the provinces; educational practices in France are far different from those prevailing here, and it is literally true that school children have very limited free time; also, development of adult libraries has been tortuously slow, and it would be illogical to expect the less-widely accepted children's services to do more than follow closely behind the growth of adult libraries.

The Paris Library School was the keystone of American contributions to public library development in France during the decade following World War I. After promoting American-type libraries in the Aisne and in rue Fessart, the American committee was concerned lest its work falter through lack of personnel trained in popular library techniques.

This concern led to a request to the A.L.A. to conduct a six-weeks summer school in 1923. So marked was the success of this experiment that the committee asked A.L.A. to organize a library school on a more permanent, year-round basis, and offered sufficient funds to maintain the school for two years. At the end of the two-year period, a Rockefeller gift encouraged A.L.A. to continue to sponsor the school for an additional three years as an international library school. 20

By any standard, the Ecole de Bibliothétaires was an outstanding achievement in international intellectual cooperation. With Sarah C. N. Bogle as director, and Mary Parsons as resident director, the school offered a curriculum based upon the recommendations of the A.L.A. Board of Education for Librarianship for a one-year graduate library school. Subject matter and methods of presentation were, of course, adapted to local conditions. A number of American and European library leaders conducted courses and gave special lectures. Indeed, a dozen nations were ultimately represented on the teaching staff, and students from more than a score of countries gravitated to this unique center of library education.
In a Library Journal article, Miss Bogle summarized the purposes of the school succinctly: "(1) to stimulate and direct advanced study in those aspects of library science, bibliography and related subjects which can be studied to better advantage in Europe than in America, by students from all countries but especially from America; (2) to provide training in modern library science, particularly in American library methods for European students; (3) to serve as a center of information on education for librarianship."

The Ecole de Bibliothécaires offered day and evening courses, summer and winter, training more than two hundred librarians before closing its doors in 1929. Its progressive influence is still felt as former students apply its precepts in libraries all over Europe. Of it, Henri Vendel, late general inspector of French libraries, had this to say, "Not only did this school form excellent librarians, but its influence extended well beyond the students, and contributed efficaciously to the rejuvenation of French libraries."

But due recognition of our own role in the French public library movement of the twenties should not obscure the truth that French librarians and teachers were acting simultaneously, and often quite independently of the American example, to make books available to rural citizens, and to bring city libraries into line with the reading needs of the populace. In the Seine Inférieure, as early as 1921, a group of teachers organized a departmental rural lending service. With 10,000 volumes at their disposal, they rotated cases of books among a large number of agricultural hamlets. Here as in the Aisne, a taste for reading was slowly nurtured among country people who had until then exhibited at best indifference to recreational reading.

In such cities as Reims, Avignon, Amiens, Tours, Chalons-sur-Marne, Brest, etc., municipal libraries pointed up the trend to liberalized practices by opening lending library sections. Branches were opened at Nantes, Grenoble, and Bordeaux. Rouen had set the pace in this respect, having had branches even before World War I.

Rural library service passed another milestone on the eve of World War II, with the creation of a departmental lending library in the Marne in October 1938. This successful venture, made possible through funds contributed by the Ministry of National Education, and through the zeal of Vendel, then conservateur of Chalons-sur-Marne Library, was destined to continue to serve its readers throughout the dismal war years. In 1945, the work of the Bibliothèque Circulante de la Marne was carried on and expanded by one of the original central lending libraries.

By the beginning of World War II, it was evident that a department bookmobile system based upon the pattern traced in the Aisne and the Marne experiments would be the model for postwar schemes to develop rural reading. It is worth recording that yet another such system was created in the south-western department of the Dordogne in 1942, during the bleakest period of the war. Here, a small bookmobile rendered heroic service to local inhabitants, as well as to refugees, of nearly one hundred communes.
Before turning from the inter-war period, a brief review of the changes in the legal status of public libraries is pertinent. The national government reflected the growing interest in lending libraries as early as March 26, 1929, when Senator Mari Roustan introduced a resolution to examine means whereby municipal reading rooms could be organized all over France. In the same year, on November 5, a "Commission de la Lecture Publique" was created. Soon thereafter a proposition to open a library in every commune in the country, as an encouragement to rural reading, was without issue; as one librarian put it, "the era of ministerial promises had opened."

Another in the series of regulations pertaining to the uniform organization of public libraries in the administrative complex took the form of a decree dated July 20, 1931. This decree divided public libraries into three categories: first, the "classified" libraries, with their unusually rich collections, (these presently number forty-two); second, the "controlled" libraries, with collections of somewhat slighter importance (thirty-five); and third, the "supervised" libraries (four hundred).

The decree of 1931 also established that head librarians of classified libraries were thereafter to be named by the Minister of National Education after courtesy consultations with the mayors of cities affected. Up to this time, it had been the mayors' prerogative to choose these librarians from available Chartists, or others whose qualifications had been determined by a special examination.

The essential administrative difference between the classified libraries and the others remains the manner in which the head librarians of the former are chosen. In other major respects, state control is uniform: each public library is under the jurisdiction of the general inspectors, in the Ministry of National Education; each submits an annual report; each must form a "Committee of Inspection and Purchase of Books," whose members are proposed by the mayor, and officially named by the Minister of National Education; and each is almost wholly supported by local appropriations.

II. Post-World War II Developments.

The steadily mounting pressures of the inter-war years for a more adequate system of lending libraries, urban and rural, were perforce curbed during the war. But with the liberation of Paris, French librarians had plans ready and were determined to see them acted upon—that the moment was ripe for long-desired changes was attested to by the eager sympathy with which the provisional De Gaulle government welcomed the projects offered by the library corps.
A survey of the public library situation at the end of 1944 provides a measure of the urgent need for thorough reorganization. In a country of 40,000,000 inhabitants, there were only about 400 libraries worthy of the name; of these, more than 25% had fewer than 10,000 volumes, and were open no more than four or five hours a week. Only thirty-nine (now forty-two) of the 400, the classified libraries, were sure to be led by trained personnel. In short, public libraries were too few, were poorly staffed and inadequately financed, and were still for the most part book tombs, frequented by a few local erudites; ignored by the population at large. If city library service was weak, rural service was woefully so. Country people were almost wholly dependent upon school libraries, the inadequacies of which have been described.

Until the end of World War II, French libraries were under the jurisdiction of a small section of the Directorate of Higher Education, in the Ministry of National Education. This section was unable either to supervise the technical operations of the libraries, or to coordinate their activities.

Political administration is so highly centralized in France that governmental units operating at any level, to thrive, must have a well-organized, highly-placed headquarters in Paris. French librarians were keenly aware that libraries would remain a neglected foster-child of government as long as they lacked adequate representation in the capitol, and they therefore urged the creation of a strong coordinating agency for libraries.

Their desire was fulfilled by a ministerial order of August 18, 1945, establishing a "Direction des Bibliothèques de France et de la Lecture Publique" within the Ministry of National Education. Later decrees issued April 5, 1947, and December 27, 1948, modified the original so that at present the Direction des Bibliothèques is headed by the general administrator of the Bibliothèque Nationale, who wears two hats.

The agency's descriptive title underscores its interest in the propagation of facilities for "public reading," or, less literally, in the development of urban and rural lending libraries.

While this paper deals only with public libraries, it should be explained that the Direction des Bibliothèques has five categories of libraries under its jurisdiction:

a) National libraries: Bibliothèque Nationale, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, etc.;

b) University libraries: those of the seventeen state universities;

c) Libraries of certain research institutions: Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, Bibliothèque du Musée de l'Homme, etc.;

d) Municipal libraries: except those of Paris and of the Department of the Seine which are responsible to the Seine prefecture;

e) Central Lending Libraries (Bibliothèques Centrales de Prêt): state-financed, departmental lending libraries now exist in eighteen departments. Twelve others have been established on local initiative, but likewise are subject to surveillance.
The Direction is divided into administrative and technical sections. The first is concerned with personnel and budget matters. The second is staffed by librarians whose duties include the development of lending library services, organizing educational programs for professional and clerical personnel, issuance of regulations governing the administration of public libraries, study of such technical problems as creation of union catalogs, inter-library loan procedures, and conservation of resources.

Among the most influential library figures in France are the three general inspectors of libraries. They are chosen from the ranks of professional librarians in government service, and are named by decree of the president (the premier) of the Council of Ministers. Every municipal library, with all other libraries under the Direction des Bibliothèques, is subject to their regular inspections.

Their reports enable the Minister of National Education to decide what subsidies are indicated to best assist each municipal library in the development of its services.

Combining in their persons outstanding technical ability and the prestige of a lofty state position, the inspectors are often able to persuade mayors, after their visits to municipal libraries, to undertake specific improvements.

Their was a basic influence in the organization of the eighteen central lending libraries. 28

The plan submitted to the Minister of National Education by the Direction des Bibliothèques and largely based upon the project conceived by the Association of French Librarians, had for its long-range objective the provision of a network of libraries sufficiently numerous and well-stocked to satisfy the reading needs of every French citizen.

Limitation of resources, it was understood from the beginning, would necessitate only gradual realization of the plan. This was not, in fact, undesirable, for some phases involved radical departures from traditional practices, and experimentation on a small scale would have been advisable in any case.

The plan was to be activated on three levels, departmental, regional, and national. On the departmental level, rural and urban services were distinguished. In terms of urban services, a line was drawn at cities of 15,000 inhabitants. In cities with greater populations, the Direction intended to encourage the organization of small sub-branches in quarters distant from the city library. Parts of the collections would be renewed periodically. Paricular encouragement was to be given to the establishment of children's sections.
In the country, state supported traveling libraries were to be organized on a departmental basis to serve small towns and isolated rural areas by means of one or more book trucks per department. Children's books were to figure prominently in each collection, and head librarians were to promote not only book lending, but through lectures, discussions, and exhibitions, to encourage reading, train local volunteers in basic library techniques, and be ready to give technical advice to anyone responsible for a public or private library in the area.

On the regional level, central regional libraries were to be created and housed with classified municipal or university libraries. The regional centers would make available reference works where needed, and facilitate research through the establishment of union catalogs. Each center would handle inter-library loan requests, and would send to Paris for any work not available within the region. If no central lending libraries existed in the department covered by a regional center, the head librarian of that center was to encourage departmental authorities to create such libraries, to the support of which the state would contribute.

At Paris, a national lending center, conceived in the image of London's "National City Library," was to be established. A principal role would be to advise readers where books not to be found in a given region could be located. The library would eventually serve as an intermediary between French and foreign libraries, and would even lend certain unusual items to regional and departmental centers.

The plan was approved by the interested ministries, and budgets were passed in 1945 for the organization and support of eight central lending libraries, and nine regional centers.

The pioneering departments of the Aisne, Marne, and Dordogne were included among those where central lending libraries were set up. Others were founded in the Isère, Loir-et-Cher, Tarn, Deux-Sèvres, and Haut-Rhin departments. The departments were carefully chosen on the basis of their geographic and ethnographic diversity, so that operations could be studied under widely differing conditions.

Regional centers were to be established at Tours, Montpellier, Versailles, Rouen, Strasbourg, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Marseille, and Lyon. But in the course of events the Direction found it necessary to transform these centers into central lending libraries in 1946, bringing the total for these libraries up to seventeen. In addition to the departments mentioned above, the following departments (wherein regional centers were originally to be located in the capitols) were now represented: Bouches-du-Rhône, Haute-Garonne, Gironde, Hérault, Indre-et-Loire, Bas-Rhin, Rhône, Seine-et-Oise, and Seine-Inferieure.29 A central lending library in the Moselle department was later added, making the present total of eighteen.
The Direction des Bibliothèques feels that improvement of urban library service in France is chiefly impeded by the absence of two essential laws. The first would oblige each city to earmark annual funds for the municipal library in proportion to the city's resources and population. The second would extend the requirement that professional librarians be appointed to direct classified libraries, to non-classified libraries as well.

Lacking these laws, the Direction must encourage and attempt to persuade the municipalities to better their services. Since the war, the general inspectors have done yeomanly work in this regard. The state is not dependent upon cajolery, however, the Direction has book subsidies among its tools of persuasion, and is also able to share with the municipalities up to 35% of the total costs of building alterations. In 1951, sufficient funds were available to enable the Direction to help municipalities finance new buildings.

The state had learned in the thirties that much can be done with limited funds used strategically to encourage municipalities possessed of the will to act, but needing the slight push which modest financial aid can supply. This principle has been well applied in the post-war years, and the results obtained have been notable in comparison with the resources at the command of the Direction. A good example of the fruits of this policy is to be found at Cambrai, where a spacious, well-constructed stack area has been added to the library building. It is more than coincidental that the city is library-minded, and has a very able librarian.

The pre-war trend toward liberalized lending policies has continued. The classified libraries at Albi, Bordeaux, Grenoble, La Rochelle, Le Havre, Lille, Limoges, Nancy, Pau, Reims, and Valence have opened lending sections located either in the main libraries or in branches.

Because the central lending libraries constitute the most ambitious and far-sighted public library project yet essayed in France, and because they are still so little known outside the country, a rather close look at them may not be without value.

The determination of French librarians to initiate a program which would, upon gradual expansion, bring books within the convenient reach of every citizen may not at first glance seem heroic. But the pattern of population distribution in France is such as to make blanket library coverage of the country immensely more difficult than in Great Britain, or even in the United States.

The basic unit of government is the commune, which may have a population as great as that of Marseille, or as small as that of an isolated mountain valley. The area of the commune may vary from a few acres to more than 400 square miles. Of the 38,000 communes in France, more than two-thirds had under 500 people in 1946, and almost 600 communes had fewer than fifty people.
of 500 inhabitants cannot maintain communal libraries. Turning the picture around a bit, the peculiar difficulties of library service in France become even more striking. Almost one-half of the population lives in communes of less than 2,000 people. And while three-fifths of the British people live in towns of 20,000 or more, only one-quarter of the French do so. Thirty-eight per cent of the French live on farms. 6% of the British, and about 16% of Americans are farmers. These statistics point up the challenge of library development in France; as in few other countries, comprehensive library service must be predicated upon a broadly-conceived, economically-operated rural program.

A system of stations and/or bookmobile routes was obviously the answer to the problem posed by small, widely-scattered population clusters. It was more difficult to choose the administrative divisions of the system, but the department was finally selected as the most practicable unit of service. Since the Revolution, French administration has been based upon the department, comprising an average of 500 communes, and headed by a prefect responsible directly to the national government. Because the central lending libraries are primarily state-financed, their conformity in organizational pattern to the dominant form of administration was desirable. Another system, dividing France into numerous tiny regions, would deprive the libraries of a number of services they are able to enjoy as integral parts of departmental governments.

The budgets of the central lending libraries are included in that of the Ministry of National Education, and while the departments are not required to contribute, they are encouraged to do so. Departmental contributions are applied by statute to binding costs and new book purchases.

Each central lending library is staffed by a librarian-director (possessing the new Diplôme Supérieur de Bibliothécaire), a library assistant, a clerk-typist, and a chauffeur. In the nine transformed regional centers the head librarians are also directors of classified public libraries or university libraries. They are assisted by professional librarians, instead of library assistants.

The central lending libraries are all located in the capitol cities of their respective departments, with the exception of the Aisne library, which has remained at Soissons. Although the regional centers were deliberately established in classified municipal or university libraries in order to facilitate their original mission as reference libraries, the others have remained entirely independent for good reasons. First, the central lending libraries operate on a departmental level, and any diffusion of effort outside the commune by municipal librarians would be viewed with askance by local authorities. Furthermore, few municipal librarians are equipped by training to administer as complex an organism as one of the centrals. Thus, the economies which might seem possible through the union of a central lending library and a municipal library at the department's capitol have been wisely rejected in favor of complete separation and freedom of action for both.
The libraries limit their services to communes with populations under 15,000. A survey had shown that all but thirty French cities of over 15,000 people have some form of library service available, however inadequate. Hence the Direction des Bibliothèques decided that the limited book stocks of the centrals can be most effectively employed for the present in the smaller communes, where library resources are so scanty. It is hoped that one day sufficient funds will be at hand to make possible regular deposits of from 500 to 2,000 books in large city libraries and their branches.

The head librarian of each central chooses the books on the basis of the readers' tastes and needs as he has studied them in his contacts with readers and station assistants. The Consultative Committee may propose purchases for the librarian's consideration.

Collections consist of a broad choice of current fiction and non-fiction, with a strong representation of children's and young people's books. The Deux-Sèvres collection is representative. In it, novels comprise 40% of the whole; biographies, 12%; history and geography, 9%; sciences and the fine arts, 4%; children's and young people's books, 23%; and works on the theater, 9%. Local interest in amateur theatrics accounts for the sturdy representation of the last-named category.

The widely divergent philosophies guiding the municipal libraries and the central lending libraries cannot be more strikingly posed than by comparing book selection policies of the two agencies. While novels and works of "vulgarisation" are often slighted in the municipals in favor of histories and expensive art works, the central lending libraries show keen sensitivity to the reading capacities and needs of their publics. It is only fair to state that there exist very real differences in reading levels between urban and rural library users. The writer's personal experiences lead him to believe, nonetheless, that the preoccupation of municipal librarians with erudite works is governed more by a tradition of serving the élite than by a desire to satisfy significant demand.

The ratio of books to population served was originally set at 1:10, compared with the A.L.A. minimum ratio of 1:3. However, statistics for the year 1952 reveal that book stocks have been built up to about 40,000 volumes in each department bringing the ratio up to 1:7.

The Direction des Bibliothèques has set an example for other public libraries, adopting the principle of free loans in the central lending libraries. The chief librarian of a central is authorized to make exceptions to the rule whenever deposits are left in a communal library where loan fees are levied. All of the proceeds remain with the local library, and do not inure to the benefit of the central.
Only in a few departments, Aisne, Gironde, Hérault, Marne, Moselle, and Bas-Rhin, are there the familiar types of bookmobiles, i.e., those giving direct service to readers from the vehicle. Elsewhere, book trucks carrying cases of books are employed.

Despite plans to encourage discussion groups, reading clubs, and traveling exhibitions, it appears that up to the present the central lending libraries program is still mainly one of supplying stations in an average 500 communes per department with revolving collections of from fifty to one hundred books. Given the limit of one book truck in each department, collections can be changed about three times a year. And to maintain this schedule calls for tight programming by the head librarian. Some fifteen to twenty-two stations, depending upon their distance from the department's capitol, are visited on each of the book truck's two weekly trips.

Stations are for the most part located in public schools, and the collections are in the care of local teachers whose responsibility it is to set schedules for open hours, publicize the collections and advise the librarian of the specific requests and general reading tendencies of local patrons. Station assistants are also requested to submit statistical data to the central.

The librarian or his assistant makes every "tournée" of the book truck, an indispensable practice in view of the untrained status of station volunteers. Each station collection is made up by the librarian on the basis of local demand as it was made known to him on the previous trip. Most of the trucks are equipped with shelves built into the side panels and faced with glass. They are used for publicity purposes. A general selection of titles is placed on the shelves before each trip, and the local assistants are encouraged to choose "extras" therefrom.

In the larger communes, there are often two or three deposit stations. But in no case does a central lending library open a station in any commune until a formal request by the mayor is received. Occasionally, in a commune where a library already exists, the central is, at first, considered a competitor. To avoid friction, the book truck passes the commune by until word-of-mouth demand is built up to such an extent that the local administration makes application for service.

To insure that the central lending libraries remain responsive to the public's needs, a "Comité Consultatif de la Lecture Publique" was formed in each department by a ministerial order of February 20, 1946. Exofficio members include the "Inspecteur d'Académie" who is the highest departmental delegate from the regional "académie," or public school district, the director of agricultural services, and the librarian, while other members represent the mayors of the departments and the library users. Each committee meets twice a year to examine the departmental library in general, and the adequacy of its collection in particular. Its resolutions are forwarded to the Ministry of National Education by the librarian.
The Direction des Bibliothèques is unable to support fully more than eighteen central lending libraries. However, a substantial reserve is maintained to enable the Direction to encourage the other seventy-two departments of continental France to establish rural systems patterned after the centrals.

The fact that twelve departments have already organized traveling libraries based on the state example is one of the clearest indications that the central lending library concept is sound, and answers a strong need. The readiness with which these departments have been willing to assume the considerable financial burden the libraries impose is also in earnest of the awakening demand in rural France for greater access to books. And once again, the policy of offering modest inducements to encourage local initiative is bearing fruit.

The "Services Départementaux de Lecture Publique," as they are collectively known, generally begin with the formation of a library association, in keeping with a law of July 1, 1901, facilitating the creation of such groups. Formal organization leads to eligibility for state subsidies. The Direction is ready with information and advice on the development of the rural service. The state's financial contribution is limited to one-third of total expenses. Most of this subsidy is spent for books and binding, but the Direction sometimes also provides and pays the salary of a trained librarian.

Information on the reading habits of country people is scanty, but a pair of articles in the May 6, 1954, edition of L'Education Nationale, so confirm certain impressions the writer formed while engaged in extension work with a U.S.I.S. library in northern France, that a slight digression may be excusable here.

After a long day's work in the fields, farmers are naturally loathe to tackle difficult reading. Their educational background also makes for modest tastes; most of them have had only a few years of schooling, and the competition and teaching in country schools are not always guaranteed to temper young minds to a fine edge. There is, too, the circumstance that rural people rarely enjoyed access to good libraries; only now in some thirty departments of France are they beginning to form the reading habit as traveling libraries bring books to the smallest communities. With good library service, and a higher educational level among rural citizens, reading standards will vastly improve.

At present, a strong predilection for adventure novels characterizes rural taste. Frank Slaughter, for example, is a bestseller in the French country side from Flanders to Provence. Veterans show high interest in war novels, while fictionalized biography has fairly wide appeal. Mysteries are always sought. Pearl Buck and Mary O'Hara in some places vie with Slaughter for popularity among American authors.
On the other hand, the social sciences are not in demand, and in politics, especially, there is little interest. Foreign literature is not generally popular as such, though certain authors, like the Americans mentioned above, have gained a mass following despite the differences in "psychology" which allegedly repulse the country reader. Straight biography, poetry, philosophy, and religion almost always bring up the rear.

But these habits are by no means unique to the French "campagnard." R. Hansen, director of popular libraries in Denmark, traced pretty much the same pattern for rural reading in Denmark during the 1952 meeting of the International Federation of Library Associations. Hansen noted that a Danish committee found a great difference in the quality of reading between young people of country and city. It appears that Frank Slaughter also reigns in the Danish countryside. Part of the blame for the low level of reading in rural Denmark Hansen fixed on the country teachers, as in France, they usually administer station collections, and in Hansen's opinion are at best inadequate reading advisers.

In recapitulation, it is to be noted that the central lending libraries, while they appear to constitute the best formula for rural library service, are being subjected to constant scrutiny. The initiative of a dozen departments in organizing their own traveling libraries augurs well for the future. In less than nine years, library service has been extended to one-third of rural France. But the Direction des Bibliothèques is aware of a number of disturbing factors. France's economic instability in the post-war period has precluded expanding the number of state-supported central lending libraries. Only one has been added to the original seventeen since 1945. Economic woes have also made it impossible to add book trucks and establish branches for the centrals where they are now in operation.

The system is primarily one of stations, and is subject to the same weaknesses that attach to all station systems. Local volunteers are not trained librarians, and, as country teachers, have only a limited familiarity with the range of adult literature. They often fail to publicize the collections sufficiently. Also, since over 90% of the stations are located in schools, the hours of service are not always suitable to readers, and frequent school holidays and vacation periods tend to reduce access to the collections.

As the system now operates, each collection is entirely replaced on every visit of the book truck. This necessitates the collecting of all books by the station assistant several days before the book truck is due. The consequent recurring breaks in lending could be avoided if a method of replacing only the books no longer being read were adopted.
III. Education for Librarianship.

The earliest law attempting to set professional standards for library positions in France was a ministerial order of December 4, 1882, exacting a Certificate of Aptitude of all candidates for university library posts. Another ministerial order of December 20, 1893, stipulated eligibility requirements for those wishing to take the examination leading to the certificate, and outlined the subject matter of the test. The baccalauréat (secondary school diploma), plus one year's experience in a university library were required of candidates. The written phase of the examination included a composition on bibliography or library administration, and classification of fifteen books. An oral test on bibliography and modern languages followed.

No program of courses preparatory to the examination was open to candidates. Only university librarians were required to possess the certificate. Other scholarly library positions were filled for the most part by graduates of the Ecole des Chartes. The decree of July 1, 1897, made it virtually incumbent upon the mayors to choose librarians for the classified libraries from among the Chartists, because the special examination referred to in that decree as an alternative means of access to classified libraries was implemented only by a ministerial order on December 12, 1928.

The Association of French Librarians never viewed the Ecole des Chartes as a satisfactory school for librarians, and in the early years of this century pressed for separate training. Under the association's sponsorship, Eugène Morel delivered a series of lectures on librarianship each year from 1911 to 1914 at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Sociales. The series was terminated by the outbreak of the first World War. After the war, the American Library School did notable work in the training of librarians between 1923 and 1929.

The Municipal Council of Paris recognized the importance of continuing the American Library School's mission, and on November 29, 1929, decided to sponsor a school to train young people for the university system.

Gabriel Henriot, conservateur of the Bibliothèque Forney, directed the "Ecole Municipale de Biliothécaires de Paris" from its inception. Under his leadership the school became an important training center for librarians of popular, rather than scholarly, libraries. With a program of lectures complemented by practice sessions at the Bibliothèque Forney, the school was reaching maximum effectiveness by 1936, when it was forced to close upon the city's refusal to pay the salaries of the teaching staff.
But Henriot, not easily discouraged, merely shifted the scene of his activities to the independent Institut Catholique de Paris, where a library school still exists.

The "Ecole de Bibliothécaires" at the Institut has maintained its initial orientation, training young women for popular, factory, and hospital libraries. Students must have the baccalauréat or an equivalent secondary school diploma, and must pass an entrance examination. Normally two years in duration, the program may be completed in one by those already having a "license", which is a degree representing about two years of university education. The program consists of lectures, practical exercises, and several weeks of experience in a library. Stress is on the psychology of reading, contemporary literature, administration, cataloging and classification, and the history of the book. The school aims to prepare its students for the new Certificate of Aptitude for Library Functions.

Even the General Confederation of Labor established a school for the training of factory and union librarians in the thirties, giving evening courses from 8 to 10 p.m.

This burgeoning of library schools pointed up the growing need for a kind of library education the Ecole des Chartes could hardly be expected to provide. The Association of French Librarians continued to work for the creation of a professional school supported by the state. But the time was not ripe. Brunel, director of the Ecole des Chartes, and Julien Cain, general administrator of the Bibliothèque Nationale, attempting to arrive at a workable compromise, added some library science courses to the Chartes curriculum. This was considered a temporary measure, although nearly twenty years were to elapse before the state was finally to sponsor an independent library school.

The revised curriculum prepared students for the state's controversial "Diplome Technique de Bibliothécaire", which was created by ministerial order on February 22, 1932.

The examination for the technical diploma, generally called the DTB, was largely inspired by the original examination for the Certificate of Aptitude for university librarianship. It was in three parts: written, oral, and a display of practical skills. The written phase was concerned with the history and technique of the book, bibliography and administration. The oral was made up of three questions, covering the same subject matter as the written portion. And in the practical test, candidates made author and subject cards for a number of books written in Latin or in several modern languages.
Preparation for the DTB as given at Chartes was anything but satisfactory from the librarians' point of view. The technique and history of the manuscript and book was still heavily emphasized in the three-year curriculum to the almost complete neglect of such modern library subjects as cataloging, classification, and reader psychology. The Ecole des Chartes remained primarily and ineradicably a school for archivists-paleographers. Vendel summarized the sentiment of the library world when he observed that the gravest defect of the DTB was that it failed to correspond to the training needs of librarians in either scholarly or popular libraries.

After the war, and before the reform came into effect, the Direction des Bibliothèques sought to make the program leading to the DTB more closely correspond to the realities of public librarianship, organizing supplementary lectures, introducing practical work, and sponsoring library visits.

The long-awaited reform finally became fact on July 29, 1950, when a ministerial order instituted the "Diplome Supérieur de Bibliothécaire" (hereafter referred to as the DSB). The order profoundly changed French library education and the means of access to positions in libraries under the Direction des Bibliothèques.

Candidates wishing to take the examination for the DSB are not bound by age or nationality restrictions. They must, however, possess one of several certificates representing one or more years of higher education. This requirement sets the DSB far above the DTB, for which only the baccalaureat, or an equivalent diploma, was necessary.

The course of studies leading to the DSB is organized under the authority of the director of the Direction des Bibliothèques. He is assisted by a consultative committee made up of other prominent librarians and scholars from the Paris area.

The program lasts one year and consists of from eight to ten lecture hours each week, plus six hours of practice work. Class attendance is obligatory. The subject matter of the courses follows the examination program closely and covers the history and technique of the book, bibliography, library administration, organization and functions of libraries (including the librarian's relations with the public) and cataloging. Since the same program must prepare for both popular and university library work (as in our American schools), a large number of scholarly courses remain in the new curriculum, but the increased emphasis upon training for popular libraries is quite marked.

Although the courses are not given outside Paris, students in the provinces may become eligible for the examination, assuming they meet the educational standards, by working for a period of three months in an approved library, without pay, under the librarian's close direction. This preparation is by no means equivalent to that offered in Paris.
The examination is held each year in June; approximately two out of every five candidates pass. The content of the examination is fixed by ministerial order of July 29, 1950:

Written Tests:
- History and technique of the book (3 hours; coefficient: 2)
- Bibliography (3 hours; coefficient: 2)
- Library organization (3 hours; coefficient: 2)
- Foreign languages (2 hours; coefficient: 1)

Practical test:
- Cataloging (3 hours; coefficient: 3)

Oral tests:
- History and technique of the book (coefficient: 1)
- Specialized bibliographies (coefficient: 2)
- Administration (coefficient: 1)
- Library organization (coefficient: 2)
- Test of candidate's choice (coefficient: 1)
  (May be on paleography, analysis of a text in a foreign language, a talk on the place of the book in education and culture.)

The DSB is a prerequisite for state library positions, with some exceptions, but does not of itself guarantee a position. Recruiting for libraries is accomplished by means of annual competitive examinations. The age limit is thirty-five years, except that candidates with previous service may be considered up to the age of forty. Candidates must have a university degree, at least equivalent to that of the licence d'enseignement, as well as the DSB. However, five years service may be substituted for both the DSB and the university degree.

The examination is in two parts. The first consists of a written composition on a general subject relating to books and libraries, lasting four hours, and carrying a coefficient of four. Those passing the first test proceed to the oral, where they are interrogated on the organization and technical operation of libraries, and on library finance and administration. Lasting, twenty minutes, the oral bears a coefficient of three.

According to an official of the Direction, about seven librarians yearly enter the national library service through this competition.

One-third of all state library positions are reserved to graduates of the Ecole des Chartes. There are two ways in which Chartists may join the state library service. First, the annual competitive examination is open to them, without regard to the eligibility requirements outlined above. The other possibility is
to obtain a favorable "classification" after fulfilling several conditions: auditing the DSB courses, taking the practical work with the DSB candidates, spending a period of weeks at the Municipal Library of Versailles, submitting reports on organization and administration of libraries and on bibliographical research, and passing an oral examination treating some phase of the training program.

The DSB program was devised to provide professional librarians of high caliber for both research and large public libraries. But the problem of creating a pool of competent technicians, if not professional librarians, for the small libraries, especially the unclassified municipal libraries, was also critical. A ministerial order of November 19, 1948, required mayors to pay a given minimum to any "certified librarian", now those with the DSB, or the old DTB, named to a library post. The not unexpected result in cities where mayors were not bound by law to hire state-certified personnel was a conscientious search for anyone but "certified librarians," who carried so high a price tag.

In order to provide a reserve of people at once possessed of minimal qualifications and receptive to more modest salaries than the DSB's, the Certificate of Aptitude for Library Functions was instituted by a ministerial order of September 17, 1951, then further modified in January 1952 and 1953.

To be eligible for the examination, candidates need only the baccalauréat or the brevet supérieur, both secondary school diplomas, the former meets university entrance requirements. In lieu of these diplomas, a candidate may achieve eligibility by passing an examination demonstrating a cultural level equivalent to that enjoyed by secondary-school graduates. The only preparation for the examination is a six-week period of instruction in an approved library.

The examination includes elementary questions on library organization and administration, history and technique of the book, bibliography and preparation of catalog cards. Special tests are given to candidates who have spent an extra month in a hospital, factory, or children's library. Passing one of these tests entitles the candidate to a certificate bearing added acknowledgement of competence for work in the special field. The Direction des Bibliothèques hopes that the certificate will eventually be accepted by mayors as the minimum professional qualification for municipal library appointments.

Completing the library reform measures is the competitive examination for library assistant positions in the libraries within the Direction's sphere. In order to take the examination, candidates must possess the baccalauréat or brevet supérieur, or have ten years service in one of the state-controlled libraries. The age limit of thirty years may be extended by the number of years the candidate has already
served in state libraries. The examination is held in October and covers the book, library administration and finance, preparation of catalog cards and bibliography. There is no official preparation for the examination.

The most systematic training of children's librarians is given at the Heure Joyeuse in Paris by Marguerite Gruny. Groups of from ten to twelve students spend three months at the Heure Joyeuse. The program consists of informal courses and intensive practical work. Lectures are given on children's libraries around the world, reader psychology, book selection, technical organization of a children's library, and story-telling. There is no tuition; students pay for their training, in a sense, by assisting in the library. Some of the students are teachers who have been designated to supervise new children's libraries in schools, others are social workers. Entrance requirements are very flexible, and the training is good, considering the limited duration of the courses, and the two-fold burden upon the director who must manage France's largest children's library at the same time as she introduces each group into the mysteries of the library world.

The association of French Librarians has for many years sponsored two-week courses for librarians of small public, factory, union, and hospital libraries. Their Bulletin d'Informations for February, 1953 offers a good example of this program in action. In early 1953, the French Red Cross asked the association to give the course for eighteen of its members slated to work in, or organize, hospital libraries. The course contained the usual lectures, with emphasis upon technical details of organization, book selection, and budgeting in hospital libraries. Somehow, time was found to do practical work and to visit libraries.

The Feminine League for Catholic Action offers correspondence courses on two levels for its librarians in the "Bibliothèques Pour Tous," which dot the French countryside. The three months course is concerned principally with basic techniques, while a ten months course, designed for librarians in departmental centers, stresses the cultural and educational role of libraries, organization of children's libraries, and extension work.

The achievements of the Direction des Bibliothèques since its founding less than ten years ago have been impressive. Library education is measurably improved; the central lending libraries are models of truly democratic library service; the continued progress of French public libraries seems assured. For all of this, the Association of French Librarians deserves a large share of the credit; an early and tenacious proponent of independent library schools, the association was a leading force behind the creation of the Direction in 1945, and its influence remains strong as it continues to work in close liaison with that agency.

* * * *
FOOTNOTES


5. Ibid., pp. 25-28.

6. Ibid., p. 28.


16. La Documentation Francaise, op. cit., p. 4.


23. La Documentation Francaise, ref. 16.

24. Ibid., p. 5.

25. Ibid., p. 6.

26. Ibid., p. 7.


28. Ibid., p. 5.

29. La Documentation Francaise, *op. cit.*, p. 9-10.

30. Ibid., p. 15.


34. La Documentation Francaise, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

28

36. La Documentation Francaise, op. cit., p. 11.


40. Iandel, op. cit., pp. 136-140.


42. Institut Catholique: Après l'enseignement Secondaire, l'Université Catholique. [Catalog of the Institut Catholique] 1953, p. 3.


44. Ibid.


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