



Introduction

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LIBRARIANSHIP, like a cake, can be cut in many ways. One may slice vertically and divide the field by types of libraries as was done in the issues of *Library Trends* on college and university, public, school, special, and governmental libraries. Or, one may cut across the subject and serve, possibly unbroken, a thin and wide slice. This was done in the issues devoted to cataloging and classification, and to personnel administration, and this is attempted here. No plea is made for the superiority of the thin and wide slice over the thick and narrow; librarianship must be explored in many directions if we are to understand its nature.

Early in the planning for this issue the writer concluded that it would not be possible to make a close examination of every square inch of the broad slice of librarianship covered by the term "public services" and that the sensible thing to do was to develop segments of the subject which promised to be of sufficient importance and interest to warrant investigation at this time. To return to our culinary metaphor, vertical cuts were now to be made in the horizontal slice, these sections were to be described in detail, and the rest was to be left untouched. In this manner, the reader would be able to taste choice morsels from every section of the cake; if he would have more, he must wait for succeeding issues.

After the issue editor had decided what aspects were to be developed, librarians recognized as experts in these areas were invited to prepare appropriate articles. Each contributor was encouraged to look forward as well as backward and to venture predictions justified by relevant facts, and most were told that the watchword for *Library Trends* might well be the opening lines of Lincoln's "House Divided" speech: "If we could first know *where* we are, and *whither* we are tending, we could then better judge *what* to do, and *how* to do it." Contributors were encouraged to provide for their specialities the salient

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points with which a librarian should be familiar if he is to determine a course of action. Only the greedy could ask for more.

There is little agreement in the succeeding pages except in basic considerations such as the importance of reading. Differences in points of view between a public and a university librarian appear in the first two articles in which Miss Warren maintains that libraries should meet all the needs of all the people and Mr. McDiarmid contends that libraries would be of greater value to society if they concentrated on services which might be described as "educational" in the best sense of the term. The special requirements of children, young people, adults, and scholars are then carefully considered by Misses Nesbitt and Roos, and by Messrs. Spear and White, respectively. In each of these articles an expert practitioner presents a careful review of the trends at a particular level of service, and here will be observed differences which derive from the different demands of the group served.

After a consideration of what readers in general require and how their demands should be met, and a closer look at how the requirements of several levels of readers are satisfied, attention is focused on three pressing problems of work with the public. These are: the choice and maintenance of a suitable circulation system, which is carefully developed by Mr. Bousfield; how to measure work with readers, which is shorn of a lot of traditional nonsense by Mr. Rogers; and how to help readers to make the best use of their libraries, which is reviewed by Mr. Jackson. In the final article Mr. Brummel of the Royal Library of the Netherlands calls attention to notable developments in public services in certain countries of northern Europe.

Additional details about separate articles do not belong here, for no one wants to be told a story he is about to read; on the other hand, the specialist and casual reader might be induced to savor the entire contents if they knew that all of the articles bespeak the courage of maturity. Their authors do not bother to dissent from the assumptions of an earlier day; for the librarian who would argue about the proprieties of the reference question shouted by a milkman in Gloversville seems to have gone the way of the milkman's horse. Book enthusiasts no longer quail to admit that reading is not necessarily more worth while than fishing or gardening, and librarians agree that a record of a book borrowed signifies nothing more than workload unless the contents of a volume are recreated in the mind of a reader. The articles which follow indicate that good library practice in 1954 obliges the library to supply a reader with several publications on a subject of interest and then leaves it to him to select the work he will read, but

Introduction

throughout the issue is found the admission, implicit and explicit, that these are idle preliminaries unless the material selected does something, presumably beneficial, to the reader.

This rich and varied fare is served with a flourish in the direction of those who did the work.