Thirty-five years have passed since the American Library Association received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation to study how public libraries might develop their services to carry out the ideals and purposes of adult education. During this relatively short period the concept of the library’s functions in adult education has developed slowly, sometimes haltingly, but continuous experimentation has pushed services out beyond traditional boundaries, and increasing study and research have provided a firm foundation of basic philosophy.

In 1924 when adult education became an organized movement, the public library was selected by the Carnegie Corporation as one of the agencies in a strategic position to assume leadership, and the A.L.A. undertook the task of investigating its role in this movement. A Commission on the Library and Adult Education, composed of some of the leaders in the profession, was appointed and after two years of study published The Library and Adult Education, a book which provided the direction for library action for the years ahead. Their recommendations have become so woven into our thinking as to seem commonplace today. By 1953 when C. W. Stone wrote a history and synthesis of the adult education movement and the public library, he stated that the commonly accepted functions of the public libraries at that time were to further self education, provide materials and information service to community informal education activities, and to act as exhibit centers for community development. Less accepted though practiced in some large libraries, were program planning for community groups and the sponsorship of group programs. Still controversial and seldom attempted were the ideas that the library should

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"assume leadership in the establishment and maintenance of a diversified program of informal adult education in the community, and mobilize its resources for the identification and realization of desirable avenues for social change."\(^2\)

It took years of effort on the part of hard working committees and dedicated librarians to achieve even some acceptance of these functions. And thanks must go primarily to the Adult Education Board, as the original Commission came to be called, and to headquarters leadership for the stimulation and development which ensued. Grace T. Stevenson has written an informative and detailed history of the activities of the Adult Education Board up to 1954,\(^3\) so this paper will merely attempt to summarize what seem to be the significant trends which prepared the way for the newer ventures begun in the 1950's.

In surveying the literature on library adult education, three periods of intensive and fruitful activity emerge, each with slightly different emphasis but all with certain common interests persisting. At the risk of repeating some of the points made by Mrs. Stevenson, it seems necessary to review these periods in order to gain some perspective for the present third stage. The basic needs as seen in 1926 formed the core of the profession's endeavor in the next two decades, and even today are not fully met. To promote the advancement of learning, which the Commission conceived as the purpose of the library in adult education, four principal areas of need were identified: 1) service to the individual adult student, 2) information regarding local opportunities for further study, 3) service to other agencies engaged in adult education, 4) search for more readable materials.\(^4\) A small periodical entitled *Adult Education and the Library* issued by the Commission from 1924 through 1930\(^5\) reveals the enthusiasm and experimentation with which the dedicated few set to work to meet these needs. This publication included descriptions of readers' advisory service, reading lists and courses, work with special groups such as industrial workers, and older boys and girls, which were being initiated by some of the larger libraries.

Primary interest from the beginning was on ways to help the individual and this called not only for a diversity of skills but also an understanding of readers' interests and reading abilities, and a recognition of different levels of materials to meet varying abilities. As a result, close cooperation was maintained by A.L.A. with developing research in adult reading and readability being carried
forward by the University of Chicago and Teachers College at Columbia University. The Commission as early as 1925 had appointed a subcommittee on readable books, which continued to function in the 1950's. The first result was Emma Felsenthal's *Readable Books on Many Subjects* which attempted to define the qualities of readability and to compile a list of available books to meet these criteria. During the depression and war years additional lists were published in an effort to meet the demand for self-development. Under the chairmanship of Miriam Tompkins the subcommittee held many meetings with those working at the Readability Laboratory at Teachers College where Rudolph Flesch was perfecting his readability formula. The list, *Books for Adult Beginners*, compiled by Pauline Fihe of the Cincinnati Public Library, was the first attempt to apply the Flesch formula to certain types of existing material. The last work of the subcommittee was on book appraisal, an attempt to work out some means of grading books as to their suitability for different kinds of readers, the hope being that this type of annotation might be placed in the book or on the catalog card as a means for guiding the reader, but this project was never realized.

These were busy years for the Board as the annual reports beginning in 1935 testify. Growth of interest in the new ideas of enlarged and more meaningful service is shown by the number of meetings devoted to adult education at the annual conferences both at Round Table discussions and general sessions, and where consultant service was frequently offered by librarians experienced in some of the new techniques.

The second period of renewed interest and activity followed after a period of three years when A.L.A. was without a special assistant in adult education. With the appointment of J. M. Chancellor to this post in 1934 came significant leadership. The reports of the Board for the next few years disclose many projects and publications. One of the principal services Chancellor rendered was that of communicating to the profession the experiences and thinking taking place in libraries throughout the country, reporting them in the *A.L.A. Bulletin* and other library journals, as well as compiling significant material in books such as *Helping the Reader toward Self Education* which describes several ways of carrying on readers' advisory service, and *Helping Adults to Learn*, a compilation of previously published articles on service to individuals and groups with some suggestions for future development. In 1940 the Board issued in mimeographed
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form Experiments in Educational Service for Adults,\textsuperscript{13} which introduced an extraordinary number of original and far-sighted ideas, many of which have yet to be tried.

Two other publications serve to indicate the increasing close relationship of the A.L.A. with other adult education agencies. The Library in the TVA Adult Education Program\textsuperscript{14} and the Printed Page and the Public Platform\textsuperscript{15} both dealt with ways in which libraries could be useful in the then extensive program of forums and discussion groups supported by the U.S. Office of Education. An article by Chancellor on "Public Library Discussion Meetings"\textsuperscript{16} further attests to his thorough understanding of the importance of discussion in developing a democratic society. As a consequence by the 1940's many current ideas and programs were in existence although limited in performance. Not only did Chancellor stimulate activity, but he also gave depth and meaning to the movement. His ideals for library service to adults were probably far ahead of his time so it is perhaps not surprising that when he resigned in 1941 he expressed his disillusionment at the meagerness of the results, the narrow concept of adult education service, and its poor quality. The article was entitled the "Diffusion of Knowledge; a Memorandum,"\textsuperscript{17} which was an ironic twist to the book by W. S. Learned—The American Public Library and the Diffusion of Knowledge,\textsuperscript{18} probably the most important single influence in the development of library adult education.

The impetus provided by Chancellor enabled the Board to continue its work in the following years, but, as Mrs. Stevenson said, "the next years were very lean ones for the Board. The war made all meetings difficult, the lack of funds made travel impossible, and with no staff assistance it became extremely hard for the Board to function."\textsuperscript{19} One of the problems facing the Board during these war and postwar years was that many policies and plans having great significance for adult education were being made by the Executive Committee of A.L.A. and by other A.L.A. divisions without any reference to the Board. It was evident that the dynamic quality of adult education was infecting the whole profession; actually the diffusion of adult education objectives throughout the whole library had been advocated from the beginning by Learned, Chancellor, and Miss Tompkins, so that diffusion throughout the professional organization was logical and encouraging. But confusion as to function was naturally frustrating and in 1948 the Board appointed a subcommittee to investigate Association activities and relationships. Its report shows that
at least ten divisions or boards or joint committees were concerned with adult education.20

The need for coordination was evident and a first step in cooperative programming was a pre-conference on adult education held at the Atlantic City conference in 1948. This was a joint venture of the Adult Education Board and the Adult Education section of the Public Libraries Division and the Audio Visual Committee.21 (In the establishment of the Public Library Division the Adult Education Section took over the functions of the former Adult Education Round Table.) This program demonstrated how far the ideas and purposes of library adult education had progressed. The topics covered indicate that group techniques and the use of audio visual materials were fully understood by the leaders at least; sessions were held on in-service training, program planning institutes, on service to labor, to old age groups, and demonstrations were given on the use of films. This excellent, forward looking program was later published in a pamphlet entitled Prospecting for Library Patrons.22

By the 1950’s the ground work for library adult education had been laid; what was now needed was support and leadership to bring into focus the diversity of activities and to strengthen and organize in a more systematic way services most needed to meet the rapidly changing communities. By now the profession had demonstrated its capacity for growth in adult education, and its potential if not its actual performance had impressed the Fund for Adult Education. The time was ripe for change and the means were at hand for bringing this about—a fortunate situation which introduced the third period of intensive adult education activity. Once again, as in 1924, philanthropy stepped in to help translate hopes into something tangible and the profession seemed ready to take advantage of the generous support offered. This time funds have been sufficient to insure careful preparation and planning for change on a wide scale, with a competent staff trained in techniques of group leadership and able, by means of demonstrations, to make clear the kind and quality of service envisioned.

It is fortunate that communication has been an essential ingredient of all of the projects under F.A.E. sponsorship so that information is readily available through annual reports, newsletters, and articles in library periodicals. A grant evaluation study made for the F.A.E. in 1958 by C. H. Hewitt23 is now available at A.L.A. headquarters which provides the most complete information on each of the five
projects undertaken since 1951, showing how the grants, totaling $1,394,212, (to be expended by August, 1961) have been spent, the numbers of people reached, their characteristics in terms of age, education, and occupation, the types of regions and libraries where demonstrations were held, a description of the specific programs, and evaluation based on many different findings. Much of the information which follows comes from this source which lists all annual reports, newsletters, publications, and periodical articles for each project.

The projects are so recent and probably so well known that it seems unnecessary to do more than list them and indicate some of the more immediate results. The American Heritage Project seemed a logical beginning since book centered discussions had been an accepted program in libraries for many years and had expanded when the Great Books discussion program was launched in 1944. The New York Public Library had evolved a program of its own in 1950 called “Exploring the American Idea.” These two programs plus the theme of the A.L.A. 75th Anniversary conference in 1951—“The heritage of the USA in time of crisis” contributed to the granting of $150,000 to the A.L.A. in July 1951 to initiate the American Heritage Program. This enabled A.L.A. to install the project office at headquarters, appoint Mrs. Stevenson as the first director with a staff of field workers and materials specialists. The purpose was to “assist public libraries throughout the United States to provide opportunities for men and women to meet together regularly and discuss the problems of today in the light of the basic documents, ideas, and experiences which constitute our American heritage. It aimed to help people become better informed, to give awareness of their responsibilities as citizens in a democracy, and to achieve a willingness to apply their own thinking in building better communities.” Here are expressed some of the concepts of library adult education which are basic today—face-to-face discussion to develop citizen responsibility with the community as the focus for attention.

The plan of procedure developed for this project was the same as that followed in most of the others. An advisory committee which was in most cases the Adult Education Board helped to determine the areas in which demonstrations were to take place, followed by a planning conference of representatives from the most interested A.L.A. divisions—such as the Public Libraries Division, the Audio-Visual Committee, and nonlibrary organizations such as the Great Books Foundation, American Foundation of Political Education, and
the Adult Education Association of U.S.A. Decision on the areas chosen was based on a desire to have diversity in size of library and wide geographic representation; planning required that demonstrations were to follow the pattern of neighborhood group discussions using books and/or films to provide a common background, and that both library and community leaders were to receive training before assuming responsibility for the promotion and administration of the local program.

It was apparent from the beginning that each community wished to develop its own program and that this opportunity for sharing responsibility was most satisfying. The tributes paid to this effort were very heartening and it was evident, as stated in the first report, that the project had brought prestige to the participating libraries and strengthened their book collections and their personnel. But one year’s support was not sufficient to obtain the results desired and applications for renewal of the grant were made and approved, carrying it up to 1957, thus enabling all demonstration areas to have received three annual grants. As a consequence the demonstration areas increased in numbers, a young adults program was started, further training was offered and several training booklets were published. The last figures show that 1,258 leaders were trained and 28,476 people participated. The influence of this extensive program will be felt for a long time but immediate consequences were not merely to be measured quantitatively. Changes of attitude in staff and trustees of many small libraries were noted, and in particular there was a growing realization that the public library is an active agency in the social and economic community.

Shortly after the American Heritage Project was under way, a request was made for funds to survey adult education activities in libraries throughout the country. Knowledge of library programs had been fragmentary and before further plans were made it was essential to secure statistical and descriptive facts. The purpose of the survey, as stated in the proposal to the F.A.E. was to determine the library’s potential as an agency for adult education and in so doing to uncover findings which might stimulate further activities which would benefit the whole field of adult education. A large questionnaire survey was launched in 1952 which is probably still fresh in the minds of the 5,000 librarians who contributed data. The results from 41 per cent of the returns which were counted demonstrated positively that the public library is a major educational institution and that growth in
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its adult education activities since 1924 had been dramatic, but on
the negative side it showed that only a small number of the libraries,
about 7.6 per cent, provided a great deal of adult services, the amount
depending on the size of the population served. Among the services
ranking least among the thirty-seven listed on the questionnaire were
the use of A-V material and programs, leadership training, both in-
service training of library personnel, as well as training of group
participants. 28

This survey provided data which pointed to the need for careful
study and planning by an administrative unit at headquarters which
could coordinate the various activities being considered. As a result
the F.A.E. made a grant to establish the Office for Adult Education
in 1953 with Mrs. Stevenson as director, the funds to continue until
September, 1961. 29 As a first step in the projected study of the role of
libraries in the total field of adult education, a meeting of the Adult
Education Board and representatives from seven other A.L.A. units
was called to begin long range planning. This was an historic event
for out of the findings of the five committees which were formed
stemmed much of the future activity. One detects the enthusiasm
and fervor reminiscent of the early days in a report written by Mrs.
Stevenson entitled “Adult Education in High Gear,”30 as she reported
on the results of the initial findings of these committees. Training in
adult education philosophy and skills, extension and improvement of
A-V materials and services, evaluating adult education programs and
services, and analysis of community needs and resources were the
areas identified as requiring immediate attention. It will be seen that
future projects were built upon these assessed needs. Another im-
portant influence of these findings was the strengthening of the public
library standards which were then being studied. Throughout the
Public Library Service, 31 the library is conceived as a community adult
educational institution.

In the meantime, in response to a suggestion from the F.A.E. that
libraries be stimulated to provide more adult education programs a
subgrant project was initiated with F.A.E. funds. Libraries were in-
vited to submit, in competition with each other, adult education pro-
grams for which funds would be granted to the winners. This was
open to all institutional members of A.L.A. and was to initiate new,
not traditional library services, which should be on-going, make use
of the techniques of mass media and discussion, and contribute not
only to the community, but to adult education in the library. Special
consideration was to be given to programs which might develop into national programs such as the American Heritage. By October 1953, a total of eighty-six plans had been received and twenty institutions were finally selected by a screening committee. The libraries chosen represented public, county, state, college and university libraries, serving populations ranging from 10,000 to over 500,000.32

In examining the diversity of these projects one is impressed by their originality and vitality, and by their particular significance for the individual community served. Methods used were varied, such as study and discussion groups in improving family relations, intergroup relations, meeting the needs of older people, experiments to determine the kind of programs suited to young people, and to the needs of industry and labor. Audio-visual materials were featured in many.33 Two of the subgrants were aimed at improving the library profession as a whole. A two-weeks institute planned by the Wisconsin Free Library Commission to study the significance of adult education responsibility in libraries and ways of implementing this belief was attended by librarians from eighteen states. This period of time made possible a thorough exploration of the many ideas introduced by a variety of specialists, and an opportunity to experience together new methods of group learning.34 The second study of importance to the profession was a field and research study sponsored by Rutgers University and developed by Eleanor Phinney to identify the common elements in planning adult education programs in five different libraries. This study resulted in the publication of *Library Adult Education in Action*,35 a book which is a basic tool for librarians interested in studying their communities and the library's varying role in the community. It also demonstrates Miss Phinney's capacity for research and her eminent qualifications for the position as research assistant in the Adult Education Office to which she was later appointed.36

The next point of attack was directed toward the library schools and their responsibility for preparing future librarians to take part in the enlarged services which were developing. The Allerton Park Conference on Training Needs of Librarians Doing Adult Education Work was held in 1954. This was the culmination of many years of concern over the role of the library schools in adult education, but as this topic is to be treated elsewhere in this volume one need only say that the published report contains significant recommendations for library schools and for the field of librarianship for years to come. One part seems appropriate to quote because the definition of library
adult education evolved at this conference summarized succinctly the philosophy and experiences which had been developing over the years and presents an integrated concept of what had often been vague generalities. Library adult education activities were defined as those for “adult individuals and groups which form a part of the total process and which are marked by a defined goal, derived from an analysis of needs or interests. These activities aim at a continuing cumulative educational experience for those who participate, require special planning and organization, and may be originated by the library or by a request from individuals or groups concerned.”

This definition is particularly applicable to the fifth and last project sponsored by F.A.E. funds—the Library-Community Project begun in 1955. This project represents the maturing of library adult education thinking and planning, embodying in its purposes and methods the best of the years of study and evaluation which preceded it, and profiting from the experience of a well-trained and responsible staff. A grant of $200,000 for two years was announced in the spring of 1955 and by September the program was launched. An additional grant in 1957 made possible its extension to August 31, 1959, with a full report and evaluation to come in 1960.

The purpose was to develop and broaden the work accomplished in the preceding projects using demonstration libraries and providing consultant service in order to develop long term adult education programs in selected states based on an analysis of community needs. In this project both demonstrations and consultant services are channeled through the state agency, thus providing a broad base of service, avoiding possible duplication of headquarters aid, and enabling the state agency to note trends and possible needs for services provided on the state level.

The annual reports of Ruth Warncke, the director, reveal the extent and quality of this most far reaching of the A.L.A. projects. By 1958 a total of eight grant states had received intensive aid but consultant services had been given to many other areas—to state associations, library schools, trustee associations, and also to the U.S. Armed Forces libraries and the U.S.I.S. libraries. Community study, which over two-thirds of the libraries reporting in the 1953 survey stated they neither provided nor wanted to provide was the basic subject of all grant state and consultant service activities. Workshops, institutes, and conferences have been the principle methods for providing training and experience. Certain characteristics have been found to be com-

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mon in all the planning. First, wide cooperation of many other agencies such as university extension divisions, sociology departments, state departments of education, state adult education associations; second, involvement of lay people from local communities. Also, there has been a noticeable “awareness of the urgency for public understanding of significant, social trends and the role of the library in stimulating such understanding; and awareness of the need for cooperation among adult education agencies.”

The annual reports provide details of the activities in each of the states. The four major steps undertaken in each pilot library demonstrate the sound sociological and educational basis for action. (1) Orientation of the pilot library staff and trustees to understand the objectives and scope of their library service. This was an absolute requirement before any action was taken. (2) The library study to determine resources and potentialities, carried on by means of questionnaires, analysis of circulation and registration records, and comparisons of these data with the community as a whole. (3) Community study to discover resources and needs—relying for this largely on citizen cooperation. (4) Finally, the identification of appropriate programs for the library to undertake, with the library either assuming major leadership or cooperating with other community agencies.

In her second annual report, Miss Warncke said that, “even though stimulation of interest in adult education and the study of community educational needs and resources are endless processes, they do produce immediately observable results.” The number of institutes and workshops held over a period of four years, testify to this, as do the comments of librarians and those who participated. By 1958 about sixty planning meetings, institutes, and workshops had been held with project staff help. The check list of materials on library adult education which have resulted from the activities stimulated by the A.L.A. and its projects listed in the third annual report indicate the extensive literature which is now available on all kinds of adult education activities. The profession has been kept constantly informed, notably through such articles as the adult education issue of the A.L.A. Bulletin in April, 1954, and a series entitled “Focus on Adults” which ran in the Bulletin from October, 1956 through May, 1957. Evaluation has been built into each of the project activities so that the final analysis of these projects which is to be published in 1960 should provide generalizations which will be applicable to future library programs.
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And now to the present; in less than six years the functions of community leadership and group programming which Stone described as controversial and seldom attempted have been demonstrated to be both possible and widely successful, not only in large city libraries, but in countless small ones, in suburbs and rural areas. Librarians who in 1952 refused to consider group or community work as a library function, or found it impossible to undertake because of lack of time, staff, space and budget, now readily assume this responsibility. One is also impressed by the infinite variety of activities which can validly be termed library adult education. If some of the earlier concerns over reader guidance and readable materials seem to have diminished in importance, perhaps the years of special effort in these areas have brought about desired changes.

If readability seems to receive less attention today it is probable that the findings from research in readability factors are now recognized by writers trying to reach a wide audience. It is also to be hoped that with more people being educated for a longer period of time, and with improved methods of teaching, better reading will result. But many librarians have expressed the fear that the individual reader is lost sight of in today's emphasis on group activities. As L. A. Martin said, personalized guidance which is perhaps the best example of professionalism has lost its original impetus. Perhaps the diffusion of this service throughout the whole staff "may have come too soon before the spirit of individual guidance was strong enough to carry over to a less dedicated group." 46 Certainly, service to the individual is and will always be the library's distinctive contribution. It is now realized, however, that the individual has both personal and social goals which are closely related. C. O. Houle visualizes two major education goals for the library—one, to help the individual attain his full capacity for self-education and to recognize his own responsibility for it; the second, a social goal, whereby we work with others to attain a better society for all individuals. One service should not be emphasized above another in carrying out our goals; rather we should have a flexible, balanced program growing out of the contributions of many services.47

In attempting to assess the value of these years of A.L.A. leadership in adult education one recognizes that the reorganization of the A.L.A. which resulted in the establishment of the Adult Services Division in 1957 reflects the steady and persistent efforts to bring about recognition of the adult education function of libraries.
is now a sense of unity in the diversity of services which have developed. What was the function of a small committee in 1924 has now developed into that of a large and strong A.L.A. division under the able leadership of its executive secretary, Eleanor Phinney. In this new organization the old Adult Education Board was dissolved and its advisory and counselling services were taken over by the Program Policies Committee of the A.S.D. The three-fold definition of adult services which this committee recently formulated for purposes of programming expresses the philosophy which has evolved over the years:

1. Adult services, in its application to library services related to continuing educational, recreational and cultural development of adults, encompasses the full range of reader services beyond the information, references, and research functions.

2. Adult services encompasses services to individual readers rendered by the library to the individual both in his role as independent user and in his role as member of a group or organization using the library service.

3. Adult services is a category of service of significance in a wide variety of types of libraries—actually in all libraries except those with collections purely technical and provided only for the specialist.48

Proof of the vigor of A.S.D. is seen in the variety of significant activities projected for the future under other committees, such as: committee on bibliography, which has already published several lists; committee on library service to the aging; committee on standards in adult services; committee on a handbook to aid adult education groups in planning activities; committee on internships in adult education services. The Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups, which since its creation by the Executive Board in 1946 has been so active, is now a part of this division.49

With a belief in the educational purposes of the library firmly established and faith that the search for ways to translate belief into action will continue, the prospects for the future of library adult education look bright.

References

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29. Hewitt, op. cit., p. 120.