



Introduction

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“HERE IS AN INNOVATION that does honor to the sensibility of a people, and it is an American innovation: the libraries reserved for children. Those light and gay rooms, decorated with flowers and suitable furniture; those rooms where children feel perfectly at ease, free to come and go; to hunt for a book in the catalogue, to find it on the shelves, to carry it to their armchair, and to plunge into the reading of it. They are better than a drawing room or a club. They are a home.”¹ Thus Paul Hazard, in *Books, Children and Men*, describes the children’s library in a statement as well known to librarians as Robert Leigh’s conclusion that “children’s rooms and children’s librarians have been the classic success of the public library.”² Because, however, the ability to change—to adapt to new surroundings and circumstances—must be inherent in the nature of innovations that become established, of successes that continue “classic,” the range of public library services to children has of necessity been amplified to include many new notes, many new combinations of old ones.

An examination of the new melodies thus played becomes especially pertinent now when all aspects of library service are definitely in a state of exciting development. True, all libraries may still be able to say, with Socrates, “All good is magnetic, and I educate not by lessons but by going about my daily business.” It is that daily business, however, that has changed. In what ways, as far as public library service to children is concerned? This issue of *Library Trends* explores some of those ways, of significance to all librarians, as has been pointed out so ably by three presidents of the American Library Association.

At the third general session of the ALA-CLA Conference in Montreal, June 24, 1960, Frances Lander Spain, delivering her inaugural address as President of the American Library Association, focused

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attention upon library service to children and youth as the solid base upon which is built the entire pattern of library service to society. Florrinnell F. Morton, succeeding Mrs. Spain as President of ALA, sought to remind all librarians of their joint responsibility for the achievement of all goals in librarianship, when she delivered her inaugural address at the banquet which closed the Cleveland Conference, July 14, 1961: "We must remind ourselves constantly that any one of the individual goals is but a part of our whole action program and that we, as individual members, have a stake in, and a responsibility for, the realization of that total program."³ James E. Bryan, President of the American Library Association, 1962-63, devoted much of his inaugural address, delivered at the second general session of the Miami Beach Conference, June 22, 1962, to problems arising from increased student use of libraries and stated emphatically: "If it is not the inalienable right of every American boy and girl to have . . . a children's library and . . . a children's librarian at hand, it should be, and it is our responsibility to make it so."⁴

Responsibility for the advancement of any area of service, however, can be assumed only when significant aspects are surveyed and some guidelines indicated. Yet one issue of one periodical cannot do more than to suggest a few of the expanded areas of service, such as services to the exceptional child and to adults working with children, and services utilizing nonbook materials; to indicate some of the exciting new organizational patterns, such as services operating under "systems" organization and services being carried on under a wide variation of administrative patterns; to survey a few of the important publications recently in print, such as *Children's Service in Public Libraries*,⁵ by Elizabeth Gross and Gene Namovicz, or publications yet to come, such as the related personnel study being conducted by Hazel Timmerman; to report on work in progress, such as the formulation of standards for public library services to children; and to assess certain long-established activities, such as storytelling, book selection practices, state library responsibilities for children's service in public libraries, etc.; and to rest the whole upon a brief history of the traditions upon which library service to children is built.

Although it was planned that service to children as it is conducted or may be conducted in public libraries of the United States would be the major concern of this issue, it was hoped that one definitive article might discuss the international scene in public library service to children. However, correspondence with Everett Peterson, Head,

Introduction

Division of Libraries, Documentation and Archives, UNESCO, and with Eileen H. Colwell, Chairman of the Section on Library Work with Children in the International Federation of Library Associations, revealed that children's library service in many countries was not yet sufficiently advanced to permit the writing of such an article. Current interest in Latin America, however, and publicity concerning the Books for the People Fund made it seem of value to include a brief survey of children's library services in Latin America, even though a description of the world situation regarding such services could not be included. Thus, "Children's Library Service in Latin America" became the concluding paper, bearing perhaps little relationship to others in the issue but indicating still another way in which this "American innovation: the libraries reserved for children" may be an inspiration and an active aid to children everywhere.

References

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2. Leigh, Robert D. *The Public Library in the United States*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1950, p. 100.
3. Morton, Florinell F. "United by Common Interests and Common Purposes," *ALA Bulletin*, 55:715, Sept. 1961.
4. Bryan, James E. "Students, Libraries, and the Educational Process," *ALA Bulletin*, 56:710, Sept. 1962.
5. Gross, Elizabeth H., and Namovicz, Gene I. *Children's Service in Public Libraries: Organization and Administration*. Chicago, American Library Association, 1963.