



Public Libraries Utilize Non-Book Activities And Materials in Work with Children

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AESOP MIGHT HAVE WRITTEN a fable thus:

A dispute once arose between Book and Nonbook in a public library as to which was the more persuasive of the two. They agreed, therefore, to try their power upon a young patron to see who should be able to lure him into the library first. Book began by coaxing him with adventure, science, and poetry. But the more enticing Book became, the faster away from the library the young patron walked saying, "I do not want to read." Then came Nonbook with pictures, music, and activity. The young patron thus lured by the film-showings, club meetings, story hours, and tempting displays entered the Library, looked, and then began to read. Thus Nonbook was declared the winner.

Formerly controversy may have existed in some communities that held to the idea that a library was a storehouse for books and that all extraneous material should be barred from it. Happily today this notion has been exploded by the wide use of audio-visual aids in the schools, by the acceptance of television in the home, and by the strong pull of advertising.

Children are neither forced nor bribed to go to the library. Because children's capabilities vary and their interests change so quickly, it is recognized as good strategy to employ many means to catch these fleeting interests, the precious time, and the varying abilities of childhood. And librarians, especially children's librarians, are no longer ashamed to admit that they do use many legitimate means to acquaint young people with books as well as to encourage them to use books and to read books. However, these very "lures" have intrinsic values

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of their own and must be considered apart from books for their own contribution in stimulating the thinking of young people.

So, unlike the altered Aesop's fable, Nonbook is not the winner, nor is Book the stronger. It takes both to achieve the librarian's goal of "the right book to the right child at the right time."

Because it is acknowledged that there are so many books in the libraries and so many children outside the libraries and that the ultimate goal is to bring them together, it is appropriate to examine more closely the means to accomplish this. Although there are various ways, those discussed here are most often associated with children's libraries. They will be classified as (1) films and filmstrips, (2) recordings, (3) displays and exhibits, and (4) clubs and other activities.

Films and Filmstrips. Schools have early recognized that films help bring children to books. Several reasons—the high cost of films in comparison with that of books, the lack of space and equipment to use films, and inexperience on the part of librarians in using this medium have made the library lag behind schools in using films with children.

However, local film circuits, film centers in more areas, additional rental films, and librarians' ingenuity have made available more films than ever before for children's rooms of the library.

There are two distinct uses of films and filmstrips in programs: (a) a regularly scheduled program where one long film or a combination of shorter ones make up the entire feature, and (b) a storytelling program combining films or filmstrips and possibly music with the story.

Since children are exposed to films so freely in their schools and in home television viewing, the question arises of just how "educational" these library film showings should be. Should only a storybook film or a book-related one be used?

The first type of program allows for the use of documentary narrative, travel, nature or wildlife films, or animated ones. Some libraries gear film showings, which ordinarily draw an older group of children, for family night in the library. It should be realized that what children see on the screen may well be a springboard to further exploration. Films attract nonreaders by eye and ear appeal, stir their imagination, and suggest hobbies or further pursuits of interest which can be satisfied in books.

The second type of program, related as it is to storytelling, calls for a more artistic or creative film to enhance the mood of the accom-

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panying story or recording. Usually these combinations follow some theme such as Indians, animal tales, or stories around the world. This type of program allows for the use of community resources—an animal borrowed from the zoo, an Indian artifact from the museum, native costumes from a foreign-born resident, a dance routine from a local studio, souvenirs from a traveling patron, or a variety of records. It is possible to vary the program by using the film to introduce a discussion or to precede a talk by a guest authority.

Every librarian who has embarked on a children's film program knows some of the problems—most of which can be avoided by (a) insisting upon date confirmation if the film is rented or borrowed, (b) previewing the film to assure that it and the projector are in good repair, (c) having a competent operator, and (d) holding the film program in a room that can be sufficiently darkened and remain ventilated.

Filmstrips are more flexible, can be used with less complicated equipment, and can move at a pace dictated by the operator and viewer. However, the same criteria—artistry, faithfulness to the story, and good taste—are as applicable in selecting filmstrips as in choosing films.

Any library purchasing, renting, or borrowing 16mm films should refer to *Films for Children*,¹ an annotated list of 205 such films which are not classroom or informational films, but those which children view for the same reasons they read good books. The introductory articles also provide an excellent foundation from which to plan programs with good taste and imagination.

No one can say just what place films will have in children's libraries of the future. Certainly it takes no crystal ball to predict that more and more films and filmstrips are going to be produced. It can only be hoped that quality will not be sacrificed, that some of the better television programs, such as *Discovery*, the Shirley Temple *Fairy Tales* of a few years ago, and the Walt Disney *Wonderful World of Color*, can be made into 16mm films for rental or purchase by public libraries.

It is hoped, too, that the forthcoming film of *Mary Poppins* by Walt Disney Productions will launch a trend in faithful adherence to the already approved text of well liked juvenile stories. And further it is hoped that the plans of Morton Schindel, creator of Picture Book Parade, will materialize. He feels that the classics of children's literature have much to offer the modern child, and plans to follow his *Randolph Caldecott* filmstrip with other folk tales and rhymes. He

plans also to enter the conceptual field with Sesyle Joslin's *What Do You Say, Dear?* and other books about sizes, shapes, and sounds. He envisions the day when he can produce "live" films from books like *Homer Price*.²

The challenge of using 8mm film is another possibility not to be abandoned. Its perfection will make possible the filming and re-showing of local talent puppet plays, story hours, and other special programs.

Daniel Lesser, Film Librarian of New York University, is concerned because there is no Children's Film Center in the United States, as there is in 17 other countries, to support and promote the growing interest in the planning, production, distribution, and exhibition of children's films. His investigation, the results of which should be published in 1963, is expected to show that the public library is the best means of implementing a nationwide program of film showings for children.

Recordings. Unlike films and film projectors, records and record players are within the price range of most public libraries in the United States. There are no accurate figures to indicate to what extent these libraries use or circulate records, but a safe assumption would be that all who do any programming have found records indispensable in the following ways:

(a) To combine with stories. A Folkways music or dance recording sets the mood for a story with an international background.

(b) To enliven preschool story hours. It is expecting too much of preschool children to sit quietly for a whole story recording. They need to respond physically to what they hear. So *Looby-Loo* and other records of this sort encourage listening to follow instructions. *Mexican Hat Dance* urges creative interpretation, and other records form the background for the rhythm band instruments.

(c) To provide incentive for creative dramatic interpretation from such story records as *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* or *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

(d) To introduce books. Action-packed retellings of the Landmark Books in Enrichment records, the vivid sound pictures in the Weston Wood productions, or the dramatic readings of Boris Karloff or Charles Laughton provide a different sort of talent from that of the local storyteller.

(e) For music appreciation. Some libraries have regularly scheduled record programs for older boys and girls. One session may be

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centered around jazz recordings; another built around the music of one composer; another, songs of some special era, such as the Civil War. Folksongs, folk dances, or native music are other possibilities. Experience has shown that these programs are best when the group is small and informal and when a librarian or leader is at hand to interpret.

Many children's departments provide a listening area where a child may listen to recordings of his choice without disturbing others in the room. Any library considering the purchase of equipment for such an area will want to examine the recent American Library Association publication, *The Testing and Evaluation of Record Players for Libraries*.³ Like the *Consumer's Report*, it lists features and faults of various makes of record players, and all necessary purchasing information.

In 1960, *Junior Libraries* sent a questionnaire to 100 libraries known to have children's record collections. Elizabeth Thomson,⁴ reporting on these findings, remarks that there is a great disparity as to who selects children's records, if and how they are classified, whether or not they are included in the card catalog, if they are shelved in the children's room, who can borrow them, and the use made of records in the children's room. The survey shows that this is a field still in its experimental stage and one which needs further research and guidance.

Perhaps the greatest unanimity was shown in the use and promotion of recorded material. Most of the libraries with record collections included them in bibliographies and recommended them to teachers and youth leaders; two-thirds of them used them in their own programs. The greatest disparity came in handling records. Too often records were kept in the "audio-visual" division of the library to be borrowed only by adults or by children accompanied by adults. In some instances records were purchased only for the library's use, not to circulate at all. However, Mrs. Thomson reports that many librarians are rethinking this question and permitting children to borrow and to be responsible for records.⁴

Children's rooms which do buy records to circulate, and then preserve their colorful and informative folders with clear polyethylene covers, find their record display much more appealing than was possible with the former practice of enclosing all records in durable, look-alike brown folders.

The nature of some records indicates that they have a greater use

in the home than in library programs or group listening. Foreign language records, which are growing in popularity, need to be heard over and over to offer the maximum benefit. Talking Books for the Blind, of course, must be circulated. Other nonmusic recordings such as poetry and play readings receive their best use in the home.

There is apparently no widespread agreement that all library patrons are entitled to borrow records. The manner of handling records in the library determines to a great extent their use: "It is impossible today to choose recordings from the racks of a record store or from the catalogs of jobbers. There is rich material in the field, but also much that is shoddy and commercial. And much of the best material is produced by small companies and never finds its way, unfortunately into record shops or jobbers' catalogs. Here is where librarians and teachers can be most helpful to parents and make available to them lists with critical reviews of what is good."⁵

Elizabeth Thomson, who lamented these difficulties in record selection, resolved to do something about it by compiling *Children's Record Reviews*,⁶ issued five times a year with a cumulative index and complete purchasing information. The New York Public Library has also recently published a selective list of the best available children's recordings.⁷

Displays and Exhibits. Alice Rusk has enumerated the following reasons for library displays: (a) to interest patrons in library materials and library activities, (b) to relate library activities to the subject areas in the library and the community, (c) to furnish bases for instruction in library activities, (d) to encourage group participation by having able children produce some of the publicity, (e) to provide atmosphere for various special days and holidays, and (f) to add a decorative note to the library.⁸

Like other nonbook materials used in the children's room, the display can be a powerful means of stimulating interest in books, but unlike films and records, it does not require expensive equipment or a talented operator. On the contrary, as Kate Coplan writes in these comforting words, "If the librarian is by talent or temperament artistically inadequate, he may legitimately borrow ideas, materials, and techniques from any available source in order to make classroom (library) bulletin boards brighter, more attractive, more potentially educative. Certainly it is not plagiarism, but justifiable resourcefulness to adapt existing tools tending to stimulate learning, or to assist more readily in the dissemination of information."⁹ These ideas which

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libraries may borrow can come from the billboards, magazine, radio, television, or newspaper advertising, from song titles, book jackets, news stories, or school assignments. And materials to carry out the display may come from the supermarket, museum, classrooms, and the children's toy box. For a completed display one may combine ideas and materials with the professional know-how as pictured in such helpful books as Kate Coplan's *Poster Ideas and Bulletin Board Techniques for Libraries and Schools*⁹ and her earlier one, *Effective Library Exhibits*,¹⁰ or Reino Randall's *Bulletin Boards and Displays*,¹¹ or *The Library Lure-a-Matics*,¹² along with monthly ideas in *Wilson Library Bulletin* and frequent articles in all library periodicals.

No matter how artistically the displays are set up, they will defeat their purpose if they point to only one title which, when circulated, makes the display purposeless, or if the library materials they call attention to are in a locked case or reserve shelf and cannot be circulated until after the display is removed. According to Marjorie East, "Your display becomes an exhibit when it depends primarily upon visual means to communicate ideas and when it shows materials carefully arranged so that the ideas as well as the objects themselves are easily apparent to the viewer. The materials used in an exhibit are most appropriately three-dimensional models and objects. But other visual materials, such as drawings, pictures, and graphs, can join the objects and models to help explain the idea. The exhibit is, in a sense, a culmination of display art."¹³

Some of these exhibits can be borrowed in whole or in part from museums, local hobbyists, classroom units, Scout or club projects. Some publishers furnish galleys and layouts to show how a book is made; others make available original illustrations of artists, and still others loan dolls or other story-book characters like the Moomins¹⁴ currently on tour from Harry Z. Walck. The United Nations has a number of exhibit items, and from time to time the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has a variety of exhibits sent free except for postage. Junior Red Cross can usually be counted upon for portfolios from foreign Red Cross units. *Scholastic Magazine* has an annual juvenile art exhibit on tour.

Almost all librarians are collectors of something, and children's librarians especially find it hard to resist story book dolls, stuffed animals, pictured fabrics, and other book associated items. These add interest to displays or story hours. A listing of available items plus their source and price may be found in *Top of the News*, May 1961.¹⁵

Most exhibits are suggested by books themselves and can be depicted in scenes and shadow boxes, table top displays, dioramas, or peg boards. In the absence of museum display equipment the average library must improvise its exhibition furniture from easels, painted boxes, concrete blocks, glass bricks, or screens. Directions for devising the exhibition furniture are graphically given in *Bulletin Boards and Displays* by Reino Randall¹¹ and the Kate Coplan books⁹⁻¹⁰ mentioned previously.

Exhibits may invite participation by children. The book *Fairy Tale Tree*¹⁶ suggests a tree with 12 nests on its branches, 12 eggs in each nest, and a story in each egg. This was arranged in one library by use of a bare branch with colored plastic pot scratcher nests. Large capsule "eggs" from a prescription shop held the title of a fairy tale. Children were invited to open an egg and see what story it suggested. If it was a story the child had already read, he could put it back in the nest and open another egg. If it was a title new to him, he was helped to find the story to read. Bookmarks or booklists which relate with whatever is being displayed are effective means of having the items recalled even after the exhibit is removed.

Children's rooms in some libraries have exhibits that are permanent. Tropical fish aquariums or goldfish pools, cages of parakeets, or growing planter boxes are attention getters. The architecture of the library may suggest pleasing exhibits. A pillar in the Denver Public Library made possible a reading carousel for children. Its center of attention are the seven large replicas of Beatrix Potter animals standing by each seat. Other children's rooms have been transformed into a juvenile Newbery Bookshop. Little Toot, complete with Gramatky's features, is a children's bookmobile in Los Angeles.

Displays in corridors outside the children's room are an added invitation. Any display, whether simple or elaborate, must be planned so that people will look at it, will become interested in it, and will think about it.

Clubs and Activities. When a boy wants to play baseball, there are sure to be a playground in his neighborhood and some other boys who share his interest. There are orchestras and bands for those who play instruments. Dancing classes provide an outlet for young ballerinas. The museums sponsor children's groups in art and nature. Other associations provide camping experiences for boys and girls. But there are usually no groups for those whose main interest is in composing a poem or story, in leading their puppets through a play, or in sharing

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a hobby with someone. And that is why children's rooms in most public libraries have changed schedules, rearranged furniture, and made facilities available so that activity groups can meet and share experiences not usually provided by any other institution in the community.

Some general rules for planning a library program have been set forth by the Young Adult Committee of American Library Association:

- A. Be sure there is an interest and a need for such a program.
- B. Be sure librarians are enthusiastic about the program and it has the support of the staff.
- C. Plan the program in advance so that announcements may be available to publicize it.
- D. Plan the program meetings for regular intervals. Weekly programs seem to have the longest life, showing that continuity is an asset. Staff time is, of course, a consideration.
- E. If the children are to be included in the planning, have an agenda or topics for discussion ready to present to the program committee before they are called in to help plan it, but do not try to dictate.
- F. Provide a stimulating atmosphere remembering that this is not a recreation group, but one designed to explore ideas through the use of library materials.
- G. Clearly define the age group when the announcement is made. If young children attend a program planned for a junior high group, the older children will soon drop out.
- H. Do not allow adults (except as moderators, guest speakers, or leaders) to participate in the discussion.
- I. Be sure that the group abides by all library rules and regulations, maintains respect for the room in which it meets, and conducts the meeting in a dignified, purposeful manner.¹⁷

Group activities usually sponsored by children's libraries fall into six categories:

A. *Viewing or Listening Groups.* Children of all ages, preschool through junior high, come to regularly scheduled or occasional story hours, film showings, record hours, or combinations of all three. A discussion of storytelling is found elsewhere in this issue.

B. *Hobby Clubs.* Boys and girls who are interested in collecting stamps and coins or in creating puppets or in making other handicraft items are some of the hobbyists who use the facilities of the library as a workshop where, under the guidance of an interested

leader from the library staff, a volunteer, or a paid specialist, children may exchange ideas or items, work on their creations, or arrange hobby exhibits. Puppets thus may be used to introduce story hours or for special programs for other children in the community. Some libraries have their own puppet stage, either portable or built into the room, as is the little theater in the Children's Room at St. Paul, Minnesota. Because most budgets do not allow for the purchase of extensive art supplies and because most libraries do not favor having children pay a fee for library clubs, the ingenuity of the leader plus the cooperation of business firms enables the groups to have paper, fabric, pieces of lumber, plastic, and many other scraps from which imaginative objects can be devised. Whether the aim is to promote an interest in hobbies or to publicize the achievement of the hobbyist alongside the books they used, such clubs or hobby displays do stress the importance of books.

C. *Literary Clubs.* Children like to create and to express themselves before an appreciative and critical audience. Under the guidance of a capable leader literary clubs should make an effort to avoid a classroom atmosphere, but in these club meetings children may listen to mood or picture music and write what they feel; they may write stories suggested by a picture or cartoon; they may even learn various poetic forms as da-da or haiku. Some clubs contribute to a library magazine. Other groups specialize in journalism and invite newspaper men to talk about the work of reporters or copywriters. One library has a Silver Penny Club where children listen to poetry readings, share old favorites, and write their own poems. Book reviewing groups meet regularly in many libraries. Some of these groups offer suggestions which aid librarians in book purchasing; others write reviews which are used on book marks or in folders to guide other children's reading.

D. *Discussion Groups.* Even though children are encouraged in school to express themselves and to enter into class discussions, there is something inviting about the informality of a small group, meeting in a library and talking about their common interests. At this anniversary period the Civil War is a matter of great interest, and Junior Civil War Roundtables sponsored by their adult counterparts are meeting in children's rooms. In many instances leaders come from adults in the community who specialize in certain battlefields or generals.

Another discussion group with an adult counterpart is the Junior

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Great Books. The Indianapolis Public Library has participated in such a program for a number of years and makes this comment about its experiences: "Love of reading and a thoughtful approach to new books and new subjects are more important than a high intelligence rating and advanced reading ability of the participants."¹⁸

In this Indianapolis program, some questions are still unanswered: how far is it possible and advisable to go in assigning adult books for reading by children; how much stress should be put on the classics of children's literature; to what extent should modern children's books be included; and for how long a selection can the children be held responsible? The final conviction of the Indianapolis Public Library, however, is that the Junior Great Books program is worth the time and effort invested in it.

Clubs with an emphasis upon arts may discuss outstanding plays, better movies or television programs, or reproductions of famous paintings. Children are encouraged to express their ideas, impressions, or reactions. Good results in this endeavor are more easily achieved in the informal atmosphere of the library.

Many libraries annually change the theme of their discussion groups and use such subjects as cycle stories, folktales, Newbery books, titles by certain authors, or various historic periods. Discussion in these groups may be preceded by a film, a reading-aloud period, or by storytelling. Any of the discussion groups may be utilized on radio or television programs.

E. *Book Clubs or Reading Clubs*, as they are often called, along with storytelling are the most popular of children's library activities. It is not necessary to review all the controversies which have appeared in many articles about children's reading clubs. However, these sensible questions asked by Alice Cushman should be answered before a library embarks upon a reading club program:

What are we striving for?

Will the plan bring to the library those who have not already the library habit well established?

Will the device for recording reading be simple in its operation?

Will it permit time for assistants to perform good service to all readers?

Will there be enrichment in the experience?

Will the good and exceptional reader be led towards new and higher levels which he is capable of attaining?

Will it be a hysterical race or will it in some positive way indicate the fun and importance of books?

If *Club* remains the magic word to hold a group together, let those children meet for mutual enjoyment.¹⁹

F. *Adult Clubs*.^{*} The staff and the facilities of the children's room have a definite responsibility in providing training sessions for Scout leaders in the use of library materials on handicraft, games, dramatics, or badge requirements. Recreation leaders need to know the techniques of storytelling and what game and craft books are available. Mothers who come with preschool children often stay for discussions on reading habits and child development. Elementary school and church school teachers and leaders of other youth groups can benefit from workshops or conferences in or near the children's room so that they can become familiar with materials to help them in their responsibilities. Oftentimes the librarian has to take these materials in the form of an exhibit to the group if it is not convenient for them to meet in the library.

Just as Alice asked, "Of what use is a book without pictures?" so might today's child ask of the children's room "Of what use is this place without music or pictures or movies or clubs?" Whatever the immediate need of the child, the answer to his need is what he is seeking and hoping to find among the books and nonbook materials of children's libraries. He will find his need fulfilled in the library if those responsible for children's services always keep in mind the philosophy stressed by Lillian Smith, author of *The Unreluctant Years*: "Because we are adults so long and childhood is so brief and fleeting, it is assumed that the experience of childhood is relatively so much the less important. Yet childhood is the impressionable and formative period, so receptive and so brief that a child has less need of and less time for the mediocre than the adult. The impressions of childhood are lasting, and the sum of its impressions is the pattern taken on by maturity."²⁰

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* Public library services to adults working with children are discussed in detail elsewhere in this issue.

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