The role of the public library in continuing education is as lacking in exact delineation today as it was twenty years ago. We continue to seek positive definition of our own role and of the library's relationship to other institutions and agencies carrying out adult education programs within their communities. Within the framework of continuing education we include liberal adult education, parent education and family life education, education for personal development and cultural enrichment, intercultural education, and those important elements of remedial education which include basic literacy training, reading improvement and training in job-related skills. A Platform for Continuing Education for Adults and the State of New York, issued in 1960, suggests four types of continuing education—education for work life, for family life, for public life, and for richer living—and these categories accurately point out the broad scope of continuing education. A definition proposed by Grace Stevenson in 1954 is relevant today; she said then, "Is not adult education really, in simplest terms, the continuing education of adults necessary to all men if they are to fulfill their obligations and realize their highest potential as members of society no matter at what level it begins, what details it involves, or how it is obtained?" With this broad definition in mind, there can be no valid arguments between formal class work and informal self-education, between individual reading and group participation, between remedial reading and reading and discussion of Plato or Camus. Rather, the total resources of a community, including all the materials and services of the public library, must focus on the needs of the citizenry at a given time, must establish immediate and long-range objectives to meet these needs, and must anticipate the changing needs of the future. How does the public library meet this responsibility?

The Library and Continuing Education

The newly revised Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966, forces us to evaluate our library role, our sense of commitment, and the degree of our achievement in meeting such standards as the following:

The community library must be an integral part of the area it serves. Communities differ, as do people. A service institution such as the library must be clearly related to its constituency, to the predominant interests of local people, to their beliefs and aspirations, and to their problems. The library must know of, and work with, the organized groups and established institutions which the people maintain. It must coordinate other sources of information and ideas, avoid unnecessary duplication, and fill gaps in the intellectual resources available.

The library system serves individuals and groups with special needs. . . . The library system should have materials for, and provide services to, individuals and groups with special needs.

An analysis of the full implications of these standards points to the library as initiator, provider, and supporter of all adult education activities and services required by all people in a community as these people, individually or in groups, pursue educational goals.

In this issue of Library Trends we are concerned with two approaches to group services. The first approach focuses on services to the community and groups of individuals within the community having similar characteristics, interests and needs. Students, labor, business, the aging, the foreign-born, housewives, the handicapped, are examples of such groups. The second use of the term group services refers to services performed for people in groups and includes lectures, discussion groups, exhibitions, concerts, and classes. The library profession agrees that the individual reader or potential reader is the library's primary concern but that he may be sought out and served in groups and by means of group activities as an extension of basic library service.

Some historical perspective is essential. In 1954 there came to public attention a full-scale debate on the relationship of public libraries to adult education, or, as Harry A. Overstreet phrased it, "the illusive thing called adult education." The April, 1954, issue of the ALA Bulletin could well be a focal point of today's discussion of the role of the public library in the continuing education of adults. Library literature and adult education literature gave considerable space to the identification of principles in the 1950's and have given less space,
comparatively, in the 1960's. One assumes that this change in emphasis took place not because the issue was settled but because new problems have demanded most of our attention.

The basic philosophies of John Chancellor, Cyril O. Houle, Alvin Johnson and others are too well known in our profession to require re-emphasis here, but it may be helpful to trace a few events and publications of the 1950's which are of importance to the identification of the library's role in adult education. At the end of the 1940's the Public Library Inquiry had given focus and direction to our thinking about public library service. A major stimulus to library adult education came from the leadership of the American Library Association and projects supported by grants from the Fund for Adult Education; as one example, the Library-Community Project was established in 1955. Of great importance in the present context was the publication in 1954 of Adult Education Activities in Public Libraries. This survey, with data collected from four thousand libraries of all sizes during the years 1952 and 1953, concerned itself with what public libraries were doing to help adults and young adults in continuing education. A library was assumed to be providing educational services “if it performed with planning, direction, or participation one or more of the services which were included in the six general categories of service—supplying, planning, advising, training, informing, and doing.”

This study, statistical in nature, concentrated on services to groups and to the community at large.

*Library Adult Education in Action: Five Case Studies,* by Eleanor Phinney, was published in 1956 and described the programs of the public libraries of Mt. Vernon, New York; St. Mary's County, Maryland; the West Georgia Regional Library and the Public Library of La Crosse, Wisconsin. A major premise of this report was that the fundamental purpose of the public library was to provide the means of continuing education, and library adult education was not equated with library-sponsored group programs in any narrow concept.

The July 1959 issue of *Library Trends,* edited by C. Walter Stone, was devoted to “Current Trends in Adult Education.” Stone assessed the progress made by libraries serving the field of adult education and said, “If all the accomplishments reported have not been as important, so far-reaching or as widely accepted as might be wished, these facts may be regarded as challenges for the future.” Later Stone concluded,

Viewing the scene through darker glasses, the contributors seem to
The Library and Continuing Education

be saying that while the challenges of adult education are great (especially for public librarians) a small group of people in a few larger libraries have been and are still doing most of the important work. Further, the work which is now being done is severely handicapped by the lack of well-defined local objectives, lack of professional understanding and acceptance, and by the lack of adequate adult education training.9

The latter part of the 1950's and the early 1960's served to establish the general principle of public library cooperation with community groups and agencies, and integration of the library with the community it served. Special programs were also organized by many libraries, such as the Great Decisions Program and a considerable expansion of the Great Books Discussion Groups which had been introduced into public libraries in the late 1940's, expanded book review and film programs, current events discussions, and forums and lectures on topics of pressing public interest. A further expansion of the public library's role in continuing education occurred in the 1960's and is clearly stated in Robert Ellis Lee's summary of Continuing Education for Adults Through the American Public Library, 1833-1964. Lee said,

Another major concern of librarians during the period from 1959 to 1964 was the attempt to provide service to the "difficult to reach" groups in society: the aged, labor, illiterates, and the culturally deprived. In the implementation of educational services to adults, there was a marked trend toward focusing services on community needs and problems, cooperating with community groups and organizations, cosponsoring activities with other community agencies, and utilizing community talents.10

The year 1960 saw the publication of the Adult Education Association's Handbook of Adult Education in the United States and the final sentences of Grace Stevenson's chapter on "Adult Education in Libraries" are worth remembering: "To fulfill this role [as a community resource] competently the library must take an active part in community life. It is not enough for the library to be a child of its time. It must be a maker of its time as well."11 A paper by Eleanor Phinney, "Focussing Library Services on Community Needs,"12 given at a symposium on Librarianship and Adult Education at the Syracuse University School of Library Science in 1963, urged librarians to know their communities as well as their library resources.

Leadership continues to be taken by the American Library Associ-

July, 1968
ation in promoting educational services to special groups. The work of the Joint Committee on Library Service to Labor Groups, Adult Services Division, and the institutes and publications of the same Division on library service to the aging are examples of the library’s role in continuing education on a national level. In 1964, the Adult Services Division issued an official statement on “The Library’s Responsibility to the Aging,” and two of its declarations on library service to the community are especially worthy of note: they stressed the need for “providing library service appropriate to the special needs of this group” and for “working with other institutions and groups concerned with these problems and needs.”\(^\text{13}\) ALA’s cooperation in organizing background reading for participants in both the Golden Anniversary White House Conference on Children and Youth in 1960 and the White House Conference on Aging in 1960–61, and its suggestions for implementation of the conference recommendations on a local level are also important examples of a national library role.

In recent years a great many libraries are focusing on library service to adults of low education and are assuming a major role in the nation’s war on poverty and its concentrated efforts to overcome illiteracy. Federal funds have made possible many new and expanded programs which have recently been summarized in a government publication, *The Federal Government and Public Libraries, a Ten-Year Partnership, 1957–1966.*\(^\text{14}\) In 1965 Peter Hiatt discussed “Urban Public Library Services for Adults of Low Education” in *The Library Quarterly,* while the publication of Bernice MacDonald’s report, *Literacy Activities in Public Libraries,*\(^\text{16}\) in 1966 stimulated national interest.

Issues of *Library Journal,* September 15, 1964,\(^\text{17}\) and *Wilson Library Bulletin,* September 1965,\(^\text{18}\) attested to the growing interest of the library profession in potential service to a new group of readers at the beginning level of adult education. Such articles and reports are necessary background for an analysis of the varied ways in which libraries approach this expansion of traditional services. Under Meredith Bloss, the New Haven Public Library,\(^\text{19}\) in conjunction with the city’s Community Progress, Incorporated program, established its first Library Neighborhood Center in a former supermarket. Bloss says, “Our job is not to make readers out of non-readers nor to increase circulation, but to help each person be more alive, reach, or see more. It’s not a matter of our reaching the under-educated, but of his reaching somewhere. It’s not a matter of involving him in our programs, but of
The Library and Continuing Education

finding out where he is, where he wants to go, and how he can use a
helping hand on the way." A similar approach was followed in
Baltimore in 1965 when Evelyn Levy was appointed Supervisor of
Library Service in the Enoch Pratt Free Library’s component of the
Community Action Program. No specific literacy or continuing edu-
cation activities are necessarily found in these cities but rather a
broad, community-centered approach to the total needs of a group of
low-income and under-educated citizens.

In the Brooklyn Public Library, the appointment of Hardy Frank-
lin as the first Community Coordinator in charge of Brooklyn’s “out-
reach” program in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area was designed to
acquaint community groups with library services, assess the needs of
the community and act as liaison between community and library. In
California, in 1966, the Oakland Public Library opened a Latin Amer-
ican Library to serve the special needs of its Spanish-speaking popu-
lation, another evidence of a total library service approach to a specific
population group. In contrast to these other cities, the Cleveland
Public Library, in 1965, established a Reading Centers Project under
Library Services and Construction Act funding and, under the di-
rection of Fern Long, Supervisor of the Adult Education Department,
assumed both a teaching and a reading guidance role which involved
that library directly in literacy education. Earlier, the Cumberland
County Public Library, Fayetteville, North Carolina, had initiated
a literacy program in 1961. This library had established classes for
beginning adult readers using the Laubach Literacy Films and the
services of local volunteers from the Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

A direct attack on illiteracy was made by the La Retama Library in
Corpus Christi, Texas, by the establishment of adult book collections
of high interest but low reading level. These books were taken di-
rectly to the people in poverty areas by bookmobiles. The participa-
tion of the three public library systems of New York City, the Brook-
llyn Public Library, The New York Public Library and the Queens
Borough Public Library in the television program, “Operation Alpha-
bet,” involved these libraries with the Board of Education, the Welfare
Department, labor and church groups, and a variety of voluntary or-
ganizations in a city-wide attack on illiteracy organized by James J.
McFadden, then Acting Commissioner of Labor. The libraries par-
ticipated in planning this program, made efforts to reach new patrons,
sold at cost the Operation Alphabet Workbook, and made readily
available great quantities of supplementary reading and job-related
materials.

JULY, 1968
It has not been the intention of this paper to comment at length upon the library's traditional role of cooperation with local boards of education and schools in working with adult classes, scheduling class visits to the library, furnishing appropriate supplementary reading materials, and introducing a wide range of library services. However, an expansion of this service is clearly evident, especially in areas of such cities as Philadelphia, Cleveland, New York, Boston, Dallas, and Chicago.

It is too early to decide the relative merits of these approaches to remedial adult education and to select the library role most needed and most effective in local situations. Should the library be the supplier of appropriate reading materials and guidance services or the operator of community centers with a variety of adult programs designed to appeal to citizens of low income and deficient education? In all cases, a sense of community involvement, a cooperative approach to community action and a leadership role are welcome signs of the public library's commitment to remedial adult education today. Kathleen Molz, writing in The American Scholar in 1964, had challenged librarians to say whether the public library continued to be the people's university or whether it had become a student's university. "Libraries," she said, "do not create communities, they merely serve them, and when contemporary society is itself divisive, split now between an upper and lower economic stratification, then cultural cohesion, by contrast, seems artificial and contrived." 27

Librarians especially interested in service to the functionally illiterate may wish to read two useful summaries, Public Library Service for the Functionally Illiterate,28 a survey edited by Peter Hiatt and Henry T. Drennan, and an article by Pauline Winnick, "It's the Latest, It's the Greatest, It's the Li-ber-ee." 29

On a higher step of the reading ladder, the assistance given by the Miami Public Library,30 to Cuban refugees of the professional class is an example of one library's specific program for the continuing re-education of professional men in language skills, job skills, and in awareness of community resources and services at their disposal. The Reading Improvement program of the Brooklyn Public Library,31 first established under a grant in 1955 in cooperation with Brooklyn College, has been operated solely by the Library since the grant ended. This program aids adults of all reading levels in improving their reading skills, speed, and comprehension.

In recent years it is difficult to locate any large body of published
The Library and Continuing Education

literature indicating a strong library involvement in liberal adult education or family life education. One may assume that adult education is now taken for granted by libraries or one may fear, as did Margaret Monroe,\(^3\) that the librarian shortage has forced many libraries to reduce their educational and cultural programming and limit their participation in community and group work. Could it also be possible that libraries continue to carry on programs and develop new programs, but have too little time or inclination to write about them? It is true that The New York Public Library,\(^3\) the system which the writer knows best, could report a lessening of attendance in Great Books Discussion Groups, but a tremendous upsurge of interest in the group discussions of Significant Modern Books of the Twentieth Century, an interest evident both in neighborhood branches and in central buildings. This library also developed a new discussion program recently, Today's American in an Age of Technological Change, and made an interesting experiment in limiting enrollment, by invitation, to business executives in two experimental sessions. These business executives were assumed to have a vital concern with the implications of technological change for the individual, for labor and management, and for government. This program, first supported by a small grant from IBM, is now open to all adult registrants.

In Baltimore and in other cities, what is now taking the place of the Enoch Pratt Free Library's famous Atomic Energy Institute of 1947? Are the majority of public libraries consciously refraining from discussions of world peace, integration, freedom of dissent, educational change, drug addiction, draft evasion and other problems of grave importance to our communities and our nation? Do we feel incapable of offering trained leadership, a nonpartisan platform, and a wealth of resource materials to reinforce group discussion of current issues and problems?

Other factors may be involved in the library's change of emphasis. Do we believe that television and radio programs today, and the speed of mass communication, have made face-to-face discussion and local programming unnecessary? There seems general agreement with Alan B. Knox\(^4\) that the majority of participants in continuing education are college-educated adults, middle-class, book-oriented, and with professional or managerial occupations, and that these individuals prefer to return to the university or college campus for continuing educational opportunities. Where an active university extension program exists as at University College, the Adult Education Division of Syra-
cuse University, or at Whittier College in California, or at the University of Wisconsin Extension Division, the public library may legitimately decide to leave the area of continuing education to university extensions and make its contribution by support of adult reading at a serious level. But what of rural communities and areas without campus opportunities?

On a national basis, there have been several interesting developments extending the role of the public library in liberal adult education. These developments include the participation of the Adult Services Division, American Library Association, with the American Assembly in developing a study-discussion program, Goals for Americans, based on the report of the President's Commission on National Goals; the preparation, by the same Division, under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation beginning in 1962, of the excellent Reading for an Age of Change series, with high potential usefulness for group discussion as well as for individual reading; extensive programming for National Library Week with educational as well as promotional emphasis and increased library-community cooperation.

On a regional basis, the state of Indiana is experimenting with the use of professional adult educators on public library staffs. This new development followed the extensive Indiana Training Plan for Library Adult Education covering the years 1954 to 1958, while it is an interesting experiment, it is too early to evaluate its success.

Another example of continuing education on a statewide basis—this time the continuing education of librarians—is the unique Spring Institute for Librarians of the Missouri Fine Arts Institute, held in conjunction with art and music specialists. Mary R. Pamment, analyzing “Adult Education Activities in the Public Libraries of the Pacific Northwest” finds primary needs to be financial support, integration of the adult education function with all aspects of library service, and coordination with the community’s cultural and educational needs.

On the local level, one example of library sponsorship of a unique pilot program on occupational trends and career planning originated in 1964, in the Public Library of Lakewood, Ohio. This program “consisted of a series of four informal forums designed to highlight for adults some of the complex changes taking place in occupations and vocational education and to acquaint them with the library’s resources in these fields.”

A development of increasing importance today is the use of edu-
The Library and Continuing Education

cational television and radio by many large libraries and library systems. The New York Public Library and the Detroit Public Library produce their own television programs on a regular basis, and programs during National Library Week and for other special occasions are gradually involving more and more libraries in this newer medium of education. The supplying of booklists and supplementary reading materials for television courses, cultural programs and discussions is probably an accepted and generally unreported fact, but has been called to the attention of viewers in the New York Metropolitan area by Channel 13, Educational Television. The Seattle Public Library's programming on KCTS-TV includes not only a half-hour program on Great Books but also a Program Planner's Institute. The Community Action program of the Minneapolis Public Library produced three TV shows to help inform the citizen in local poverty areas of the services offered by that library. Walter Gray, Jr. reports in an article in Adult Leadership on the exciting television series of the Oklahoma County Libraries. The programs covered “Medicine and You” and “Money and You,” a Fine Arts series, a Creative Crafts series, and so on. In addition to the television series in Oklahoma, there is a study-discussion program as a lively part of the Community Workshop, the Adult Education Division of the Oklahoma County Libraries.

Where libraries do not initiate or cosponsor adult education programs they have unique opportunities to support the programs of other educational agencies. The production of bibliographies useful to community leaders, such as “Problems of Poverty, a Selected Book List,” by the Westchester Library System is an example of traditional library service. Selected films are shown to community leaders either for previewing or program planning purposes, program planners institutes are held, and library resources are called to the attention of community leaders and educators with growing frequency. Libraries make files of adult educational courses and activities available. In The New York Public Library, such a file is maintained in the Readers' Adviser's Office. Both the Milwaukee Public Library and the Racine, Wisconsin, Public Library take part in the publication and distribution of community adult education directories.

Several libraries recently have reported on efforts to teach out-of-school adults as well as students about library resources and on efforts to give them actual group instruction in the use of libraries. However, the “Library Orientation Survey,” reported in the Summer 1966 issue of RQ found little agreement upon existing materials or tech-
niques, or even upon the advisability of library orientation for adults. In spite of this negative attitude, the Dayton and Montgomery County Public Library of Ohio held three successful series of Workshops on the Use of the Library in 1966. The Queens Borough Public Library, to celebrate National Library Week, 1967, had a somewhat similar program. In its new Central Library, The Reference and Research Center for Queens, it offered three lectures for adults and young adults seeking information on how to use this new facility. The lectures covered “How to Use the Public Catalog,” “Use of Non-Book Materials,” and “How to Research a Specific Topic.”

As we examine the future role of the public library in continuing education it becomes obvious that some choices must be made. Libraries with great resources will be able to serve, and to serve well, both the culturally elite and the culturally deprived. They will be able to offer the best of literature to the discriminating reader while assisting the beginning reader to use job-related materials. Most libraries, however, must grow in awareness of the urgent needs of their communities, and direct their efforts toward meeting these specific needs. In this process they will wish to identify the requirements of the community leader, the general citizen, the non-practicing reader and the non-reader who might be drawn to use educational materials for the first time. Margaret Monroe, writing on “New Patterns for Library Service” in 1966, finds newness not in the fact of library participation in adult education but rather in a new pattern of cooperative method. She says “Cooperation both with the professional workers in other agencies and with representatives of the groups to be reached is the new service pattern that consistently emerges in the 1960’s as we approach the needs of the new literate and the under-educated.”

She also points out that, at this time of rapid obsolescence of technical and professional knowledge, regular study will be necessary to hold back the tides of ignorance. As a result, she finds a second new service pattern emerging for the well-educated reader who must keep on learning, a pattern which requires “development of a program of instruction in library skills.”

Has the profession reached a consensus on the library’s role in continuing education? Unfortunately, in 1961, Patrick R. Penland found that our library goals and our attitudes did not necessarily agree. He concluded, as a whole, the librarians who responded to his questionnaire seemed to be inadequately motivated for the prosecution of their educational function in contemporary society. Have we reached a
more clearly agreement, in 1968, with a philosophy and a statement of purpose which assigns a basic educative role to the public library? Does this philosophy include more than token commitment to service to the group and to the community at large as well as to the individual? Does it assume potential service to all people, rather than to the limited number who are sufficiently knowledgeable and stimulated to seek it out? If our answers are in the affirmative, we are ready to carry out, to the best of our individual abilities and resources, a program of continuing education for our community in cooperation with its citizens and groups.

References

4. Ibid., p. 33.
14. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Program Coordination. The Federal Government and Public Li-


The Library and Continuing Education


