



Reading and the Adult New Reader

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IN THAT great novel, *Bleak House*, Charles Dickens exclaims with his usual compassion and irony:

It must be a strange state to be like Jo! To shuffle through the streets, unfamiliar with the shapes, and in utter darkness as to the meaning, of those mysterious symbols, so abundant over the shops, and at the corners of streets, and on the doors, and in the windows! To see people read, and to see people write, and to see postmen deliver letters, and not to have the least idea of all that language—to be, to every scrap of it, stone blind and dumb! It must be very puzzling to see the good company going to churches on Sundays, with their book in their hands, and to think (for perhaps Jo *does* think at odd times) what does it all mean, and if means anything to anybody, how comes it that it means nothing to me? To be hustled, and jostled, and moved on: and really to feel that it would appear to be perfectly true that I have no business, here, or there, or anywhere; and yet to be perplexed by the consideration that I *am* here somehow, too, and everybody over-looked me until I became the creature that I am!

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A bleak world indeed, and the bleakest of existences; a strange state which is difficult for sophisticated readers to imagine. Who among them remembers when he could not read? Incredible as it may seem, many Jos exist today. It comes as a surprise to many that any large number of persons in the United States of America cannot or do not read. Is this not the most educated population in the world, with the largest school system where everyone goes to school?

DEFINITIONS

In spite of attempts to eradicate illiteracy, the problem of inadequate literacy abilities continues. By the most conservative figures, 21 million

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Americans cannot read or write. A large proportion of this illiterate population is concentrated in the oldest groups who are 65 years and over. They constitute 45 percent of illiterates, and the proportion will increase as more younger persons are educated. A state of partial literacy exists among a large part of the population. One out of seven Americans is considered functionally illiterate, which means that thousands are unable to read and comprehend want ads, job applications, directions for long distance dialing, Social Security forms, leases, and credit forms. During the decade between 1960 and 1970, the number of persons unable to read and write in any language decreased in the nation by 50 percent, in the South by 25 percent; yet estimates show that by 1980 there will be 5 million persons 25 years and over with less than 5 years of schooling and over 21 million with less than 8 years.

Figures for literacy are misleading because it appears that they overestimate the number of persons functionally literate. The Laubach study in 1963 estimated that approximately 8.3 million people 25 years and over have less than a fifth grade education.¹ The corollary problems such as undereducation, poverty, unemployment, alienation, frustration, exploitation, unhappiness, dependence and deprivations are evident in many facets of the society.

The application of the amplified definition of literacy beyond merely minimal reading and writing ability increases the total number of adult readers who may be developing reading abilities and uses for print materials. The concept of literacy as functional broadens the field of concern, and creates a new concept regarding the adult new reader and his reading. Librarians envision services in special materials and reading guidance not only during the first stages of learning and acquiring reading skills, but also during all subsequent stages in a continuing service that insures the adults use of reading materials meaningful to all aspects of their lives, and achievement of independence and self-direction in the use of such materials.

How is the adult new reader defined? For the purposes of this paper, the adult new reader is identified as: a person sixteen years of age and over, whose native language is English, or who is learning English as a second language, whose formal education may extend to the eleventh grade, and whose reading level consequently is at an eighth grade level or less. Reading materials for the adult new reader are those print materials that serve broad reading purposes, that place emphasis primarily on the substantive content rather than the development of

reading skills, and that either have been prepared specifically for the adult new reader or are adaptable to his level of use and interests.

These definitions are drawn from the investigation conducted by this writer during the period 1967 to 1972 at the Library School of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The report on this Library Materials Research Project (LMRP) is published in *Library Materials in Service to the Adult New Reader*.² The findings from that research are a major source of data presented in this discussion. Previous research and studies relevant to the subject are reviewed there and will not be discussed here. In addition to LMRP findings, several concurrent studies and recent publications are drawn upon for this article.

LIBRARY MATERIALS RESEARCH PROJECT

Basic assumptions as defined and borne out in the LMRP research underlying effective library reading development programming are:

1. The progress of the adult new reader from minimal literacy to an increasingly mature use of print is aided by the relevance of materials can bring together more appropriate materials and greater range of choices for the reader.
2. The continued reading of materials by the adult new reader serves as a reinforcement in the development of basic reading skills and as a source of general information, enrichment, broader understanding, aesthetic pleasure, and immediate goal satisfaction.
3. The more that can be known about the adult new reader, his characteristics and reading behavior, the more effective can be the reading guidance service to him.
4. The application of standards for evaluation, selection, and use of materials can bring together more appropriate materials and greater range of choices for the reader.

The major objective and product of the LMRP was the development of criteria for the evaluation of reading materials for adult new readers. The four major procedures used for the collection of information were: the Materials Analysis Study, the content analysis of existing reading materials through the application of the criteria developed by the study; the Population Study, a survey of adult new readers through personal interviews in a universe drawn from participants and students in selected adult basic education, job training programs, and library reading programs in five metropolitan cities;

the National Adult Programs Study, a study of reading materials within the context of use as reported by teachers and administrators in a random sample of national and adult basic education and job training programs; and the Indigenous Literature Study, an analysis of indigenous literature, primarily by Black writers, for any special relevance to the relationship between content and use of materials.

The survey of readers supplied data about the adult new readers' social characteristics and reading behavior, reading interests and patterns. Some of the general facts found among the sample of respondents in the cities of Baltimore, Cleveland, Los Angeles, New York, and Philadelphia may be summarized broadly. The sample totaled 479 respondents, of whom 69 percent were women, and 74 percent were Black. The average age was 33.2 years. The average years completed in school was 10.2, while 16 percent had completed less than 6 years of school. Nearly all the readers spoke English, and one-fourth spoke a second language, usually Spanish. One third had lived all their lives in the present localities, and nearly a third had lived from 6 to 20 years in the same city. The majority of readers, 58 percent, were students in adult basic education programs, 30 percent were taking high school equivalency courses, 35 percent were in work training programs, and 16 percent were in library reading programs. Over one-third were in services occupations, there were equal percentages in craft and blue collar jobs, and slightly less than one-third in clerical and white collar jobs. Incomes showed a wide range—some of \$10,000 or more and some less than \$2,000. Generally incomes were in what are considered poverty levels with the average income for a family being \$5,000 and an average income for individuals of \$3,500.

Adult new readers in general recall titles that may be classified as fictional and biographical accounts with ethnic appeals. Apparently readers recall what is most meaningful and enjoyable to them. Although a significant amount of reading is required and stimulated by school studies, the titles recalled are diverse and seem not to be directly related to school study.

Subject interests and clues to kinds and types of reading are related to immediate needs and responsibilities in relation to adult roles and life styles. It is evident not only that reading materials must meet a diversity of interests, needs and abilities, but they must be in every possible format and cover numerous subjects. Special authentic materials pertinent to the interests, life styles, and problems of potential readers have immediate appeal.

Information about job opportunities, career and vocational guidance, and counseling materials, as well as curriculum-related selections, are areas for collection building. Autobiographies and biographies, ethnic and cultural history, poetry, and short stories have strong appeal.

A reading activity rating provided an index that measures the extent of reading activity of each respondent by his use of print materials, i.e., newspapers, magazines, comic books and books. A majority of readers were in the active reader group, about one-third were somewhat active readers and 14 percent, very active. When comparisons are made on the basis of age and education, certain distinctions are apparent. Younger Blacks score higher than whites. Among older persons, the whites score higher. When comparisons are made on reading activity scores in relation to race, sex, age, and education, Blacks score higher than whites, women score higher than men, older persons score higher than younger, and persons with more education score higher than those with less.

The youngest group of adult new readers who are between 16 and 24 years of age are of particular concern to adult education agencies. In the LMRP survey of readers they constitute 23 percent of the total sample. In comparison with the total sample, in this group there are fewer women. They had more education than the older age group and slightly higher median years of formal education, 11.02, which is a grade higher than the average 10.2 years of the total sample. They participate more frequently in adult education and employment-oriented programs. They enjoy particularly going to movies, dances and other such leisure time activities as going to the bar, pool hall or bowling alley. They comprise the largest radio-listening audience, read newspapers somewhat less, read slightly more in magazines, and read comic books. They read books more than the older group. The majority had read from two to five books in the last six months.

The respondents' perception of changes in their lives because of participation in adult education classes focuses mainly on personal relations. Four areas in which perceived changes were noted are: better relations with or understanding of other people, more self-confidence, and improved ability to communicate with others. Practical materials related to homemaking, child care, job training and advancement, and school work were helpful when they provided aid and solutions for everyday problems such as writing letters, credit buying, cooking,

filing tax forms, love and sex. Personal and social development also were important areas of interest. Of special appeal were the biographies of persons either unknown or famous, as well as sensitive portrayals of characters in fiction with whom readers could identify. Survival, civil rights, and the counterculture were topics of deep concern. Interest in local, national, and international news was also expressed.

Five general subject areas of special interest to students according to teachers' reports were: literature, history and government, science, biography, and religion. Other significant areas of reading interest included ethnic literature, problems of race relations, cultural development, consumer education, and job information.

Adult new readers' perceptions of their reading appear realistic. Over half of the respondents considered that they had reading problems. The majority felt that they were fair readers. Nearly two-thirds felt that they read more than their parents. A significant percentage, 61 percent, read aloud to other people.

EVALUATION OF READING MATERIALS

The Materials Analysis Criteria (MAC) for the evaluation of reading materials as developed through the LMRP investigation is in the form of a checklist. This MAC Checklist consists of criteria to be used in analyzing print materials—books, pamphlets, booklets, magazines, newspapers, broadsides, forms—which provide the adult new reader with information and ideas, and give personal satisfaction and pleasure while aiding in the development of reading skills. The major areas considered in the evaluation are bibliographic characteristics, analysis of content, measurement of readability and appeal to readers. A quantitative evaluation and subjective summary based on the detailed analysis provides the basis for the evaluation's descriptive critical annotation. The subject, the adult roles, the attitudes and values, the readability factors, accuracy and authenticity are noted. This detailed analysis and annotation provides a record for use by the librarian, teacher, and reader for use in reading guidance.

The significant aspect of evaluation is the depth and precision of analysis. The extent of analysis obviously depends upon the content, type, and quality of the material. The usefulness of the material analysis criteria for a library's program of reading service depends upon the philosophy of service and competence of the staff.

READERS' COMPREHENSION OF AND RESPONSE TO
CULTURAL AND ETHNIC MATERIALS

Two special studies directly related to the LMRP investigation focus on reading materials that center around the cultural backgrounds of ethnic groups. These studies were carried out as doctoral dissertations by Deligdisch³ and Sherrill.⁴ Deligdisch gathered information on competency in reading in relation to use of the material by adult new readers. Sherrill gathered data about the influence of ethnic or cultural factors on the reading responses.

Deligdisch's study aimed at identifying characteristics of materials needed by the adult new reader in making the transition from regular use of print for daily life and work situations so that he understood and found their use rewarding, and would be encouraged to regular use. He validated his hypothesis that "Adult new literates read with better comprehension materials that reflect their own cultural background." The hypothesis was tested in a series of sub-hypotheses in terms of reading comprehension defined as a process at three levels of understanding: literal, implied, and applied meaning. The sample of adult new readers consisted of two different groups, Blacks and Mexican Americans, with distinct cultural backgrounds, who were enrolled in literacy programs. A selection of culture themes was made, reading materials developed which expressed these themes, and test materials constructed and administered in the classrooms.

Culture themes distinguished for the Mexican American group included: family concept, man's role in the family, woman's role in the family, extended family relationships, the roles of the man and the woman in society, the community, work ethos, fatalism, and time orientation. Themes distinguished for the Black Americans included: artistic expression and creativity, matriarchal family, and man-woman relationships. He found evidence that publications centering around these culture themes of the ethnic group may improve the adult new reader's ability to apply and use what he reads. The higher comprehension of each group of his own material at the level of literal and implied meaning are statistically significant ($p > .01$). On the level of applied meaning the two groups—Blacks and Mexican Americans—scored significantly higher on their own culture-related material than on the material related to another culture.⁵

Sherrill's study is concerned with the measurement of the affective reading responses of Black and Puerto Rican readers to literature by

Black and Puerto Rican authors. The hypothesis is that the intensity of response will be greater when the subjects read literature which reflects their own cultural background than when they read literature which reflects a different culture. Sherrill states that "the racial orientation in reading response is the focus of this study, and its influence upon both the literature and the reader student is profound, pervasive and varied."⁶ He measured the positive and negative responses in the reaction of the Black and Puerto Rican readers toward a highly specific type of literature which reflects the ghetto experience. Literature is defined as personal experience literature exemplified in imaginative writing, i.e., biography, autobiography, belles lettres, and possibly history. Categories of some common life styles and value orientation were developed.

For purposes of measurement, a reading form was devised which consisted of eight passages of literature, four each of Black and Puerto Rican authors. The passages were chosen according to the expression of personal values as nearly as they could be determined. The subjects responded to each unidentified passage on a four semantic differential scale. The subjects were participants in adult basic education or English-as-a-second-language programs. The results were programmed and subjected to computerized statistical analysis for observing the degree of the intensity of response agreements. Indices of the affective response agreements of the two ethnic groups of readers were calculated from the group responses registered on a 32 s-d scale to eight sample passages of literature representative of the two cultures. Sherrill validated his hypothesis:

When adult members of two ghetto ethnic minority cultures respond to samples of literature indigenous to each culture, and members responding to literature from their own culture as well as from the other culture, then the members of each culture will demonstrate greater agreement of affective response (higher response intensity) toward their own literature and lesser agreement (lower response intensity) toward the literature of the other culture.⁷

In addition to the matched median statistics supporting his hypothesis, Sherrill was able to develop histograms of the frequency distributions of the group responses of the Black and Puerto Rican readers across four intervals of the s-d scales. He includes also a gauge of literal comprehension which represents how much of the sample

passage the reader thought he understood. These interesting details are found in his dissertation.

Sherrill concludes that among "the highly motivated group of readers" in his study, cultural factors, both in the readers and in the personal experience literature that they read, are a significant element in the process of evaluation by the reader. These factors significantly influence preferences and interpretation of what is read. He concludes further that the cultural factors in the readers' backgrounds are powerful determinants of the intensity of the affective response to what they read, and that the intensity of the affective response is greater when they read personal experience literature by authors who share their own cultural background.

Both Sherrill and Deligdisch suggest that cultural factors are strong determinants of the cognitive and affective reading responses of ethnic minority adult readers.

A major conclusion from the LMRP study has been that the recognition and evaluation of values and attitudes through the analysis of the content are essential to the selection of materials and to informed reading guidance. Furthermore, the need for materials with specific ethnic cultural appeals written by persons in the ethnic group is apparent. Teachers who answered the LMRP questionnaire stressed that a particular need exists for such material with adult appeal at the beginning reading levels. The most significant and persistent theme in the teachers' statements relate to unsuitable materials. They report much of the material offends the intelligence and experience of the adult or is written only for children. These needs for new material are being met with an increasing number of titles being published and through the almost overwhelming number of programmed learning series and multimedia kits created for adult basic education and high school equivalency programs. It also appears from the analysis of a range of materials that much of interest exists in magazines, newspapers, paperbacks, pamphlets, books, and other less traditional formats that are of interest to adult new readers. The problem with these materials is they had not been identified; much of the material is difficult to find and therefore difficult to organize into accessible collections.

Researchers are in agreement that literacy and adult basic education must be defined broadly in terms of learning and life skills as well as basic literacy skills. Although several recent studies have had different

objectives and employed different methodology in collecting data, conclusions reached are significantly similar. The content of learning materials in print or other media, in order to have an affective and satisfactory impact for the adult, should center specifically around ethnic and cultural experiences and life coping skills.

READING MATERIALS STUDIED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF USE

Subject Coverage. The RFD national demonstration program of information and action for adults was developed at the WHA-TV, University Extension Television Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The RFD project developed, tested and evaluated a multimedia system for home-based continuing education for adults. It developed a curriculum design with materials for adults to learn reading, writing, and computation skills through a system of coping skills that represent pressing needs. "Coping skills were defined as the skills and knowledge needed to interact effectively in one's environment."⁸ The "content centers" devised for the improvement of the adults' quality of life and self-determination related to his adult roles as a person, in relation to others, to himself as a worker and consumer, and as a citizen. The development of skills, unlike vertical progression in schools, permitted horizontal progression. Actually the emphasis from literacy to coping skills appeared to take place as the project developed. The materials developed are not generalizable because the television programs are specific. Nevertheless, home study materials are being published and are of general use. They combine much visual content with the text. These materials are on topics that are general and draw on several bodies of knowledge. In the main, they are oriented to the family and the community. They involve concerns of daily living: work, family, home, money. The information is accurate and interesting. The group of participants reached were middle class and usually had some literacy skills. The RFD project found it imperative to develop its own material.

Life coping skills provide categories for building library and adult basic education collections. Adult educators, teachers, librarians, and staff specialists are stressing these areas. The MAC Checklist for evaluation of reading materials developed in the LMRP refined from a more detailed list nine specific areas grouped around the major personal roles assumed by adults, i.e., the role of the person in his own development, in the family, in the group, as a participant in political

and social life, education, work, and leisure. Over sixty subcategories were identified. For example, areas under personal development include: alcoholism, drugs, friendship, hate, love, personal identity, self-preservation, sexuality, social poise, and survival. Coping skill areas identified in the sample collection of materials in the LMRP and RFD study collections included twenty-five general categories: animal and insect control, aging and retirement, clothing, Better Business Bureau, conservation, consumer economics, education, emergencies and disasters, family planning, farming and related jobs, health and disease information, housecleaning, household appliances, household furnishings, housing and home improvements, insurance, jobs, money management, personal care and grooming, nutrition, pollution, Social Security, taxes, telephone calls, and transportation.

The Action Line, RFD's telephone service, found the categories of greatest concern to its users were food, home maintenance, consumer problems, family finance, gardening, health service, home crafts, employment, legal assistance, entertainment and recreations. Other areas of interest were home renting, pest control, transportation, and wildlife.

The area of life coping skills materials has been studied intensively for the Library-Adult Basic Education Demonstration Project under the Appalachian Adult Education Center at Morehead State University. The categories and subcategories identified in the *Life Coping Skills Materials List, 1973* includes fifteen major categories and 279 subcategories.⁹ The major categories are advocacy, aging, children, community, consumer economics, education, housing, insurance, jobs, leisure, relating to others, relocation skills, self, taxes, and transportation. The subcategories provide greater preciseness and range. For example, the category "advocacy" has subcategories for arrests, civil rights, consumer rights, and legal aid. Consumer rights has a "see" reference to consumer economics: consumer rights. An extensive *Coping Skills Materials Master Source List* provides a valuable guide with names and addresses of approximately 500 sources, including the subject of materials which may be obtained.¹⁰

The possibilities of such daily informational items are limitless. To meet these problems and questions, libraries must collect and evaluate materials lesser known or unknown, scattered, and ephemeral. Information on life skills subject areas frequently are found in government or business and industry publications. Such material must be evaluated carefully to be sure that accurate, authentic information

will be provided as a basis for the adults' informed choices and decisions. Several kinds of materials are suitable and should be supplied in quantity. Practical materials related to homemaking, child care, job training and advancement, and school work are helpful when they provide aid and solutions for everyday problems such as writing letters, credit buying, cooking, filing tax forms, love and sex. Personal and social development are important areas of interest. The biographies of the lives and problems of persons, unknown or famous, as well as sensitive portrayals of characters in fiction with whom readers can identify have special appeal. Popular best sellers are another special interest, as well as survival, civil rights, national and international news in priority uses of the media—television, radio, and print. These are areas of interest on which it appears libraries can build, provide and promote resources that give objective coverage and in-depth studies of current events and issues.

Life coping skills provide categories or subjects as a basis for the building of library and adult basic education collections for adult new readers. Adult educators, teachers, librarians, and staff specialists are stressing these areas. Equally important and vital, if reading is to become an independent life-long matter, are the materials with aesthetic, spiritual, and recreational values. The satisfactions are both immediate and prolonged when aspirations and backgrounds, as well as cultural values and beliefs are considered in selection of materials.

Materials Design. An important source of reading materials is that written by teachers and program staff and the students themselves. In the LMRP study, about 40 percent of the teachers indicated their programs used materials written by teachers and other members of the staff. Teachers write primarily instructional materials for class purposes and not strictly instructional materials to meet students' individual interests and reading levels or on current and informational topics. In a majority of programs, students themselves write materials. They write on subjects of personal concern, or news items of the day, short stories, poetry, letters, and autobiographical subjects.

Teacher-made supplementary reading materials were developed and evaluated by the Ohio module of the Appalachian Adult Basic Education (ABE) Center of Morehead State University. In this experiment four experienced ABE teachers were employed to develop brief life-centered supplementary reading at different ABE instructional levels. These teachers, who are indigenous to the community, attempted to design materials that had particular

relevance to the experiences of local rural population. Findings indicated that the need for systematic professional writing and production is beyond the teachers' capabilities. The complex task of combining elements of interesting adult content, readability levels, and sequential skill development requires trained curriculum writers. At Gadsden, Alabama, similar projects in the development of supplemental video tape recorded (VTR) curricular material resulted in findings similar to the Ohio project mentioned above. VTR production requires professionally trained technical and teaching staff and adequate resources.¹¹

Reading materials for rural populations are of special significance. One experiment is the publication of *The Appalachian News*. It provides a graded, low readability newspaper as a reinforcement of basic skills and as a reinforcement of the newspaper reading habits of adult basic education students. The paper provides information and curriculum based on adult needs and interests. Useful also in elementary and secondary schools, it was designed initially to serve a twenty-county rural area with approximately 2,000 students in northeast Mississippi. The articles are written on various reading levels ranging from the first to the eighth grade level. New information reported as gained by students included such matters as: employment, public assistance, Social Security, food stamps, community action programs, and further educational opportunities. Any similar venture should be based firmly on a survey of teachers and students to determine the kind of information wanted.¹²

During the last ten years, services and reading programs for adult new readers have been developed. In 1966, when the MacDonald report on literacy activities provided by public libraries was made,¹³ fifteen libraries were active in this field. Librarians felt a limited knowledge and a lack of knowledge created great obstacles to any service. From 1967 to 1971, when the LMRP study was carried out, certain libraries were in the vanguard. Thirteen libraries cooperated in the LMRP investigation for the overarching Materials Analysis Study. Five libraries with substantive adult reader services which were coordinated with adult education programs cooperated with the Population Study.

AGENCIES SERVING ADULT NEW READERS

The more extensive development of such programs was identified clearly in the applications received for a workshop on the Adult New

Reader and His Reading conducted in May 1973 by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Library School. Over ninety librarians and library specialists, library science professors, and learning center teachers applied, and more expressed interest. The diversity and variety of clientele and services were representative of several types of public libraries: state libraries, central units of large systems, regional and branch units, small public libraries, and mobile units such as bookmobiles and camper-type vehicles, community and city-county libraries. The departments named indicate the emphasis on special services: Project Outreach, Reader Development Program, Inner City Services, Reading Centers, Learning Centers, Adult Education Program, Job Information Center, Adult Services Department, Readers Bureau, Special Extension Services, and Outreach Department.

Community agencies and group organizations included: Job/Books, Operation Step-Up, Literacy Volunteers, Inc., Adult Basic Education, Laubach Literacy, Right-to-Read, Teach a Neighbor to Read, Halfway Houses, Project Crossroads, and Continuing Education Programs. Services were extended to adult new readers in various agencies such as detention centers, prisons, jails, rehabilitation centers, correctional agencies, industrial schools, technical institutes, homes and retirement places for senior citizens, apartment complexes, church organizations, other libraries, schools of library science, reading tutorial and remedial reading programs, and programmed learning centers.

CLIENTELE SERVED BY LIBRARIES

The clientele as characterized by one librarian includes "the population who are educationally, physically, psychologically, culturally, or geographically handicapped." Specific identification of clients further points up the awareness among the librarians of many individual publics within the population. These publics or clienteles are described as: the beginning, retarded, unprogressive, latent reader; the under user or nonuser; the unserved; the exceptional child; the young adult, dropout, and high school student who graduates; Black; Spanish speaking; suburban white; Chicano; Indian or Native American; and Mexican Americans. Also identified are migrant ethnic groups, young married, preschool mothers, women, disadvantaged, homebound, lower middle-class, foreign-born, adults learning English as a second language, library school students, librarians, community workers, students in adult basic education in

high school equivalency programs, preretirement, rural senior citizens, rural poor, poor Ozark hill people, rural-oriented conservatives, institutionalized, handicapped or blind. It can be seen that literacy problems cut across many areas—age, location, education, origin, life styles, and life cycle.

The various approaches or administrative foci appear in the various titles of staff persons responsible for library services: director, resource person, consultant, trainer, teacher, recruiter, supervisor, associate director, liaison, network consultant, catalyst, reference librarian, professor, materials selector, head of department, coordinator of adult services, head of reader advisory service.

Brief phrases reflect favorably and unfavorably on attitudes and values: "learn from them," "want to understand," "what does it mean," "low-level readers," "these people," "bad adjustment to white culture," "language and cultural barriers seem insurmountable."

LIBRARIES' SERVICES TO ADULT NEW READERS

The services provided through these libraries and special programs include what seem in most instances to be traditional services. They may be distinctive in that they are operational and revitalized having become moribund or limited to the few white middle-class users of the public libraries. The selection and organization of materials for adult new readers have priority along with reading guidance methods, such as subject bibliographies, annotated reading lists, coordinated buying lists for libraries, advisory service to librarians, community group services including program planning, cooperation with other educational institutions, persons, and community planning groups, book talks and book discussions, book fairs, and group programs. Other services include program planning, counseling, public relations efforts, organization of community advisory groups, and special collections placed in institution and organization centers. Training and staff development programs are mentioned. Major problems center around evaluation and sources of materials, identification of new readers, contact and promotion, and failures to interest or reach these clientele.

It would seem that librarians are engaged in soul-searching efforts to clarify, understand, and articulate the role and function of the library in the community and in the lives of individuals and groups. Questions asked include: How can we be meaningful? How can we serve? Doubts and concerns arise such as: Is it possible? Is the role informational? Is

the advocacy role important or appropriate? Does the library support or assist? Is the library in control of its own function? Can it be autonomous, self-governing, and independent? It is for all in a true democratic tradition? Does it serve the whole community? Is it for selected groups, for an elite of the educated powerful minority? Does it exercise its own rights and powers, determine its own actions or follow other agencies? Does it serve the vocal few and the strongest educational agencies?

Inhibiting factors for the adult new readers identified by librarians who were workshop applicants must be taken into account in planning and carrying out services. Professional skills and understanding must be brought to bear to meet the problems in areas of human relations and communications.

ADULT EDUCATION SERVICES IN NATIONAL PROGRAMS

The main services provided by the national adult education programs as reported by respondents in the LMRP study included the major areas of instruction, counseling and job placement inherent in adult basic education and school equivalency programs, as well as specific job training and English as a second language. The areas of emphasis are communication skills, computational skills, social living skills, as well as specific subject areas. Occupational areas of instruction included the skilled crafts and trades, clerical, secretarial and office work, health occupations, service positions, and community and public service. Topical areas of particular interest to students according to the teachers reporting were: literature, history and government, science, biography, and religion. Other significant areas of reading interest include ethnic literature, problems of race relations, and cultural development of ethnic and nationality groups. In these latter areas, supplementary reading materials are most pertinent.

EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

A study by Barss, Reitzel, & Associates identified and examined thirty "successful" and "effective" programs which could be termed "exemplary." These exemplary programs were public library programs in which it was possible to identify a reading or reading-related impact on certain of the participants at an estimated cost which appeared reasonable in relation to the extent of participant impact. Among these programs, eighteen were aimed at adults primarily in disadvantaged areas. The study has special significance to

public librarians as a model for the method of classifying various aspects of effectiveness as well as for the case study descriptions and program applications in relation to costs.

Several significant questions result—questions to which librarians need to find answers. Do specific programs and outreach centers compensate for and reinforce insularity of the client population? To what extent should modification of staff qualifications, acquisitions and organizational procedures, rules and regulations be changed? When requirements of middle-class white groups diverge from poor or ethnic or age groups and differing needs and interests appear, how can the library best provide services? They concluded that program effectiveness depends on several factors that may be inseparable: the intellectual stimulation and improved self-image which the client gains; the staff that has personal concern and genuine interest, the trust of the community or clientele, and is personally responsive and respectful of their interests; the dedication, leadership, and ability of the director and leaders; the personal contacts between the staff and the clientele; extensive and intensive planning; the continuity of program staff; and last, but not least, the quality and relevance of materials, topics, and speakers.¹⁴

Lipsman's report on public library services among low-income neighborhood residents, *The Disadvantaged and Library Effectiveness*, raises many issues.¹⁵ Many of her conclusions confirm findings of other studies. Clearly the quality and kind of materials are vital factors in the success of programs. Lipsman concludes that good materials reflect both an extensive knowledge of the contents of the material and a very specific and precise understanding of the needs and interests of the target group. "Unsuccessful programs . . . are characterized by standard collections, without a sizable quantity of ethnic materials and without the popular, easy-to-read, and the controversial items in which people are really interested."¹⁶ She points out how inadequate the community resources are for the dissemination of information on health, child care, job opportunities, and ethnic culture which contribute to the environmental competence of the individual.¹⁷

Programs can be designed to enhance cognitive skills related to reading and print materials and functional competencies encompassed in the concepts of individual growth and self-education. The nature of libraries as education-oriented, yet voluntary and informal institutions, suggest their efforts be aimed both at building cognitive skills and at meeting affective human needs. "Thus specific program

objectives aimed at supporting formal educational achievement—not only for school-age children but for adults in educational and vocational training—would have the virtues of building on existing patterns of use and responding to priority community needs.”¹⁸

Library resources are to be more closely coordinated with school resources and greater use should be made of the public library as part of the curriculum. Tutoring, remedial reading, reading readiness, and preschool programs might be supported directly by libraries. Libraries should supply referral information as well as general information, serve as cultural centers, and be truly responsive to the needs of the adults.

It is to such a need that the Library-Adult Basic Education Project, conducted from the Appalachian Adult Education Center at Morehead University, addresses its program. The precise analysis of reading materials recommended by this writer is one approach to the achievement of these various functions. It enables the staff to have a thorough knowledge of materials selected, a carefully constructed record of the characteristics of each item in the collection for use by the reader and the staff as a source of reference, reading advice, and guidance. An intimate knowledge of the contents of the materials and the interests and needs of the reader group is absolutely necessary.

The actual involvement of adult new readers in decisions about selection of reading materials and the services and programs in which they are or might be participants appears to be desirable, even necessary, to successful achievement of objectives. The studies noted in this article identify little evidence of the individuals as participants in interpretation and control. The adult new reader remains a participant who may be asked about his interest, but on the whole something is done for him or to him rather than with him. This broadening group of readers suggests new opportunities as well as new problems for librarians, teachers, and publishers. To work with adult new readers means new ventures, searching for little-known materials, and encouraging new writers and publishers.

Appeals to readers tend to center around instructional or informational values. The practical materials relating to homemaking, child care, job training and advancement, and school work are helpful when they provide aid and solutions for everyday problems. Personal and social development are important areas of interest. The biographies and lives of others, and sensitive portrayals

of characters in fiction are a major interest. Popular bestsellers are another special interest; an interest in ethnic history and culture is evident particularly among the Black and Spanish-origin respondents. Survival—personal and group, environmental and political—is a dominant theme.

The interest in local, national and international news is mentioned as of first interest in use of all communication media—television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. Information about job opportunities, career and vocational guidance and counseling are significant areas for literacy collection building. Access to local neighborhood newspapers and newsletters, is of primary importance to provide sources of information about the community.

The use of the various communication media is common to all respondents in the LMRP survey. Everyone watches television, 95 percent listen to the radio, 93 percent read newspapers, 88 percent read magazines, and 69 percent read books.

In the context of the study, the diversity and variety of reading interests and various uses of materials are extensive. Reading patterns span a range of life interests, responsibilities, and roles as adults. Within the diversity certain preferences and common interests are identifiable.

Finally, much can be learned from *Benjamin: Reading and Beyond*,¹⁹ a diary-like record of the learning efforts made by a young Black man with a wife and two children, and his inexperienced tutor, a young graduate student at San Francisco State College. “When am I gonna read?” is Ben’s question. The long, arduous process, the failures and successes are shown in this human account of a complicated human problem. Without preconceptions or experience, with much care and understanding, the young teacher learns along with his frustrated, disillusioned young student. The insights into learning methods and materials for reading will be valuable to librarians and teachers. Language is vital, and, as Ben states, “reading is everything.”

The strong and recurring implication from all the studies, each with its different and particular focus, appears to be that basic factors critical to program effectiveness and successfulness include: competency and understanding of the staff, community involvement, autonomy, quality and relevance of materials, and the knowledge and visibility of the project.

I continue to repeat that the single most significant factor in

servicing disadvantaged persons and groups may be the respect and understanding between the library user or potential user, the individual or community, and the library personnel. It is imperative to know and appreciate the life styles, cultural beliefs and values, motivations, desires, interests, and aspirations of various groups. Similarly, Lipsman found that for Spanish-surnamed users, the perception of the library as a friendly and helpful place is more important than any other factor in discriminating between users and nonusers. Use depends for many entirely on the extent to which the library is able to communicate its empathy and its ability to assist them, in particular in overcoming the language barrier.²⁰

Librarians with concrete knowledge and experiences of values and life styles of many segments of the population will have bases for building reading collections and service on resources that have breadth, depth, and appeal to many persons. Free from preconceptions and misconceptions inherent in one's own values and attitudes, one will be able to evaluate wisely.

The new literature, new writers, and publications outside the traditional trade, as well as those which surface within the usual trade channels, are exhilarating and enlightening. The underground, the counterculture, the ethnic cultures—in short, the different—may provide distinctive and brilliant quality to the sameness of many library collections restricted to limited, colorless, or inadequate collections.

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