

Alabama Library Association

University, Alabama
March 14, 1935.

Honorable R. Harry Walker
Speaker House of Representatives
Athens, Alabama.

Dear Hon. Walker:

I am writing to ask you to be a member of the State Library Planning Committee for Alabama.

One of the significant results of the present rather critical scrutiny of our social order is the recognition of the need for the great expansion of the agencies which serve the educational, recreational and cultural interests of the people. In line with this trend, many public and voluntary agencies are giving earnest consideration to the problem of meeting this need.

One of the most conspicuous lacks in cultural opportunities is that of adequate library facilities for the people, especially those living in rural areas. It is estimated that 40,000,000 people or about 40 per cent of the total population of the United States are without public library service. In Alabama, over a million and three quarters or about 70 per cent of our people are without access to public libraries.

The American Library Association has taken the lead in trying to devise means to meet this challenge on the national level (See enclosed copy of A National Plan for Libraries.) The individual states have been asked to meet it on the state level by setting up State Library Planning Committees to study conditions in their respective states and to formulate a long-time program of objectives with the steps by which they can be achieved. Some forty or more states have now appointed such Committees.

The Alabama Library Association has been asked to appoint a State Library Planning Committee for Alabama. We believe that this is a concern not only of the Alabama Library Association but of every individual and organization that is working for the welfare of the state. I am, therefore, asking you to be a member of this Committee and to help for a better day for our people in the way of library service.

I trust that I may have an early acceptance from you of membership on the Committee.

Very truly yours,

(Miss) Alice S. Wyman.

President Alabama Library Association

A National Plan for Libraries

As of January 1, 1935

IN ITS *National plan for libraries*, adopted in June and December, 1934, the American Library Association proposes:

Federation and coördination of public libraries in large systems, each system to serve a metropolitan area, a large county or several counties;

Assumption of responsibility by the state for public library service to all the people in the state;

State appropriations to supplement local library funds or to provide a minimum library program;

A federal library agency to provide nationwide leadership in the library movement;

Federal aid to equalize library facilities in the several states, so administered as to encourage state and local initiative and control;

Certification of librarians under state law;

Coördination of all library resources and services in the interest of adult education, scholarship and research.

HOW THE PLAN ORIGINATED

Planning for libraries may be said to have resulted from a consciousness of the need for great expansion and some reorganization of existing facilities, and for the extension of library service to the millions now without it. It is, perhaps, a natural corollary to the appointment of official national and state planning boards. It was initiated in January, 1934, when the Executive Board under President Countryman's leadership appointed a planning committee from its own membership, consisting of Harry M. Lydenberg,

director, New York Public Library, Ralph Munn, director, Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh, and Louis R. Wilson, dean of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago, and the secretary of the Association. The same committee was reappointed in June, with President Compton as an *ex officio* member. Suggestions were solicited from many sources, outside as well as inside the library profession, and early drafts were widely discussed and criticised. Formal action was then taken at the annual and midwinter conferences.

The national plan will, it is hoped, be suggestive to the forty-odd committees working on state library plans (and perhaps also to Canadian librarians) though it must necessarily deal with broad principles. In the state plans, these can be translated into specific proposals as well as adapted to particular situations.

Paragraphs in italics are those formally adopted by the Council. They express the conviction of the Association as of January 1, 1935. Other paragraphs were presented but seemed not to require action. Some sections are obviously still to be developed. All sections are, of course, subject to revision from time to time in accordance with the changing conceptions of library work and its relation to other public services. The plan follows:

THE NEED OF LIBRARIES

The maintenance of democratic institutions depends largely on the enlightenment

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of the people and on the vitality of their cultural and social ideals.

The growth in the quantity and complexity of knowledge points to the need for a lengthening of the period of education. The constantly accelerating rate of change indicates that man must be forever bringing his knowledge up to date if his usefulness as worker and citizen is to be maintained. A greater degree of economic security and more leisure for large numbers of the population may be expected to result—as an accession of wealth and leisure has resulted in the past—in an expansion of interest in things of beauty and of spiritual value.

If the best traditions of our culture are to be maintained and our hopes for the future achieved, there must be universal education at the lower levels, more widespread education at the higher levels. There must also be—what is now largely lacking in many areas, and only meagerly provided in most—opportunity for continuing self-education at all levels, rapid diffusion of uncensored facts and ideas to all citizens, and a cultivation of appreciation of social and cultural values which will prevent the domination of life by material motives.

To meet America's needs there must be a new conception of the organization, functions and activities of the agencies which contribute to educational, social, cultural, and recreational interests. It is not enough that existing agencies simply be provided with additional funds. They must be expanded, coördinated, and adequately financed to provide for every person from childhood to old age the opportunity and continuous encouragement for the fullest possible development of personal ability and social understanding.

In any such program of service, read-

ing—and libraries which provide reading matter of all kinds to all ages—will play an important part.

Every American citizen should have a publicly supported library near at hand, through which will be made available to him such printed materials as he may wish to use for information, self-improvement, scholarship, cultural advancement, and recreation; which will provide such aid in the selection and use of materials, and guidance in planning and pursuing his reading, study, and research as he may need and desire; and which will stimulate and help to satisfy his intellectual curiosity and reading interest in questions of current importance.

The public library typifies democracy. Those who come within its doors are from every walk of life, the educated and the uneducated, the highest to the lowest. They are supplied with books to meet their wants as varied as are the needs of a complex society.

What books mean in an organized society cannot be measured, but a progressive society without books cannot be imagined. What people read is no small factor in determining what they are. In a civilization growing daily more complex people need the best thought expressed in books to guide them.

LIBRARY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the library are to assemble and preserve books and related materials in organized collections and, through stimulation and guidance, to promote their use to the end that children, young people, men, and women may have opportunity and encouragement:

- To educate themselves continuously;*
- To aid in the advancement of knowledge;*
- To improve their capacity for apprecia-*

tion and production in cultural fields;

To improve their ability to participate usefully in activities in which they are involved as citizens;

To equip themselves, and keep themselves equipped, for efficient activity in useful occupations and practical affairs;

To keep abreast of progress in the sciences and other fields of knowledge;

To maintain the precious heritage of freedom of expression and a constructively critical attitude toward all public issues;

To make such use of leisure time as will promote personal happiness and social well-being.

The process of assembling books for these objectives involves the command of experience and judgment, not only in the appraisal of their intrinsic literary qualities, but of their usefulness in relation to the needs and interests of the community and the intellectual and cultural levels of its members.

The process of organizing requires training and proficiency in the principles and methods of librarianship and their practical application to the books to be organized and the varied groups of readers to be served.

Library service will become a social enterprise participating and coöperating with all other agencies and forces concerned with the welfare and progress of humanity. In this service one of the chief elements will be a personnel bringing to its task adequate education and training and a wide variety of special interests and aptitudes, but, above all, a broad and sympathetic comprehension of the expanding opportunities and their concomitant responsibilities in the administration of the library and its books as a source of power and enlightenment.

A system of libraries which will serve

these ends would seem to be, with our public school system, the minimum cultural equipment necessary for civilized living in America.

OUR EXISTING LIBRARY SYSTEM

The United States now has some ten thousand national, state, county, municipal, school, college, and university libraries. They typify America's interest in education, culture, and recreational reading. They have millions of books. Their total investments represent a not insignificant share of our national wealth. They are regularly used by perhaps twenty-four million people. They circulate hundreds of millions of books a year.

Our national library, the Library of Congress, is one of the largest libraries in the world, and one of the most satisfactorily organized for public use. There are other great libraries, rich storehouses and workshops for scholars. The public library is one of America's great contributions to civilization. It endeavors to make easily accessible to people of all ages and all levels of educational attainment the best of the world's knowledge as recorded in print and guidance in its use. At its best, it serves the cultural, educational, and leisure time needs of the community without compulsion, censorship, or bias, at low cost.

But American libraries are not properly distributed or coördinated for the uses of scholarship, for the general diffusion of knowledge, for cultural stimulation, or for providing recreational reading. The great libraries are largely concentrated in a few areas. Many small libraries are so inadequately equipped with books and staff that they cannot meet the needs of those who wish to use them. Some states and some cities maintain several separate,

independent library agencies, serving essentially the same population. About forty million people have no local public library service of any kind. Even the best libraries have not achieved the maximum possibilities of public usefulness.

We have many libraries but we do not have a coördinated library system. Only a part of the population is served.

The inequalities of the present system, which leaves a third of the population with no library service and another third with very little, must be overcome.

THE LIBRARY AND ITS PUBLIC

The library should become a more dynamic institution, which will assume its full share of responsibility for stimulating curiosity and reading interest to the end that the educational and cultural objectives of the country and the community may be advanced. It must be aware of the adult education movement and of the interest in informal education of all sorts, and do its full share to provide leadership and service.

Books should be more accessible. The library's welcome should be universally understood. The librarian and library assistant should know how to help all sorts of readers of all ages. In school every child should acquire the habit of reading and of turning to books and libraries for information. Books must be available quickly and easily. Regulations should be simple. There should be staff members whose chief work is outside the library establishing helpful relations between the library and organized groups and individuals. Where necessary, books should be delivered to the home.

Every citizen should be conscious at all times of the intellectual and cultural opportunities offered by the library, as the

result of continuing publicity for its books and services, through newspapers, radio, moving pictures, distribution of reading lists and reading courses, through book discussion groups, lectures, and other meetings in the library. He should think as readily of the library as a place for education, informal education, as he now thinks of the school. He should learn to think of the library as an indispensable agency for education, where anyone can find not only the materials but also the skilled personal advice and counseling necessary to effective self-study. The library must perfect and extend its advisory personnel and service.

Because some kind of after-use of what one reads is needed to make it one's own, the library should foster formal and informal discussion among readers, and aid in any other practical way to complete the educational process which begins with reading.

The library should seek to deepen the public's conviction that it is an educational institution by coöperation with other educational agencies, supplementing their educational offerings with reading suggestions, and promoting the use of such agencies as a supplement to its own service.

The librarian must not become a propagandist. He can, however, encourage reading on subjects of vital importance to the community and he can help each reader to find the books which are best for him. The reader's freedom and the library's right and duty to furnish material on all sides of controversial subjects must, at all costs, be preserved.

The library is an agency for education, culture, scholarship, and recreation. Its maintenance is primarily the function of the state and local government. But the inequalities of taxable resources among

the several states, the importance of the library's objectives to the whole nation, and the need for national and regional coöperation especially among libraries for scholarship and research, lead to the conclusion that the federal, state, and local governments might well share the responsibility for library support.

The proposals which follow are based on this conclusion.

THE STATE'S RESPONSIBILITY

For libraries, as for schools, the state should acknowledge and accept responsibility for the provision of adequate service for all inhabitants. It should encourage the continuation and increase of local support, and should assume a part of the cost of local libraries, through state appropriations to supplement local funds, or to provide a minimum program.

In each state there should be a state library agency charged with the function of developing and coördinating library service throughout the state. Competent leadership by such an agency requires not only special training but also strength of character, forceful personality, administrative ability, and freedom from harmful political interference on the part of those connected with it.

In every state where two or more separate state library agencies exist, efforts should be made to bring about such consolidation or coöperation as is in line with good administrative practice and as will improve library service.

The state library agency should maintain a state reference and lending library to serve officials and to supplement other libraries. Pending the establishment of complete library service for the state, it may need to serve isolated readers or groups of readers directly. It should work

for the coördination of all library resources in the interest of adult education, scholarship and research.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Each state should have a system of public libraries available for all its population. A comparatively small number—say five hundred—large public library systems might provide better service for all the people in the United States than is now available except in a few cities and counties. Each system might serve a large county or several counties or a large metropolitan area. The emphasis should be on the natural area of interest, irrespective of city, county, or possibly even state lines. Each community would have a branch of the large library system or a community library federated with other community libraries in a large system.

Laws permitting or requiring the establishment of such library systems should be enacted in all states now without them.

In every community where there are two or more libraries serving the public (as for example, public, school, municipal university, and state university libraries) efforts should be made to bring about such consolidation, coöperation, or division of responsibility as will promote economy and improved service.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Because the daily use of library materials is indispensable to the modern American program of elementary and secondary education, every child should have access within his school to a variety of well chosen books and other printed materials. This means that larger schools, both elementary and secondary, should be provided with organized libraries presided over by professionally prepared personnel,

and that smaller schools should be provided with books and organized library service through participation in some plan of large-unit administration. In order to bring these conditions about, those responsible for the administration and financing of both schools and public libraries should come together locally and as state and regional groups to work out programs giving to schools adequate school library service and facilities without unnecessary duplication of physical equipment, reading materials, or personnel, and without curtailment of reading opportunities for adults. It will also be necessary for boards of education to budget school libraries and library service on the same basis as they are accustomed to budget other educational indispensables such as textbooks and teaching service, and to arrange for the certification and employment of school library personnel on a professional basis.

State aid to school libraries has proved its value in a number of states. Such aid should be greatly extended.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE LIBRARIES

College libraries should contribute to the specific objectives of the college. They must be greatly expanded to serve adequately the educational and cultural needs of students and faculty.

Changing methods of instruction and the relation between the use of library books and student progress must be studied as the basis for continuous modification of the library and its service.

University and other libraries for research should be closely coöordinated (by voluntary coöperation and planning) with each other and with college, state, and large public libraries to avoid unnecessary duplication and to increase the availability and accessibility of needed books, manu-

scripts, and related materials to research workers in all parts of the country.

Universities and colleges, especially those supported by the state, should be prepared to meet the library needs of research workers throughout the state and to support the work of their extension departments in so far as these needs cannot be met by other library agencies in the state.

NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The federal government should assume responsibility for nation-wide leadership in the library movement through a library agency associated with other agencies responsible for general educational, cultural, and recreational activities.

The functions of such library agency should be to forward the development of library service in coöperation with the states and with other federal agencies; to foster inter-state library coöperation in the interest of improving the educational, cultural and recreational facilities available to all the people; to foster such nation-wide coördination and division of responsibility among national, university and other research libraries as will tend to make the materials of scholarship in some form, and services in connection therewith, equally available to people in all parts of the country; to collect and disseminate statistics and other information about libraries; to make surveys and studies in the library field; to administer federal aid to libraries if and when such aid is made available.

The federal government should recognize the inevitable inequalities in library facilities in the several states due to inequalities of taxable resources, and provide financial aid for libraries and library service to the end that reasonable facilities to use and borrow books and other printed materials may be available throughout the

nation; such funds to be allocated to the several states and territories through such state library agencies and on such terms as may be approved by the appropriate officer of the government.

The control and administration of library service should remain with states and local units of government, which are primarily responsible for library support. Federal aid should be so administered as to encourage state and local initiative.

Our national library has achieved distinction in its service to Congress, scholars, and libraries throughout the nation. It should be maintained and developed in such a way as to extend this service in an increasingly effective way.

BOOKS AND OTHER LIBRARY MATERIALS

For the general reader and student seeking a general education America's library system should provide enough of the most useful books and other printed materials to meet all reasonable demands, within easy access of all persons. This will probably mean:

That the library will greatly increase its supply of copies of the socially useful books in greatest demand;

That more national coöperation in book evaluation will be provided for;

That library purchase of novels which have little literary or social value will decrease;

That pamphlets and periodicals (which can be produced quickly to meet current needs) will form an increasingly important share of the library's collection;

That more books which synthesize knowledge in simple, direct, interesting style will be sought.

For specialists and research workers the library system must make available throughout the whole country the printed

and manuscript material required in scholarly investigation. This apparently will necessitate:

Establishment or development of libraries for research in large regions now without them and division of responsibility among all libraries for the collection and distribution of such materials;

Great development of reproduction devices so that the content of any book or manuscript available anywhere in the world may be made quickly available to any reputable student anywhere in the country.

Every public library system should endeavor to make it possible for any patron to secure information concerning any subject. This should be effected through additions to the library itself, or through coördination of specialized libraries with it.

Libraries should assume responsibility for the preservation and use of visual materials and mechanical substitutes for the printed page.

The library will coöperate with writers, editors, and publishers to insure production of books suited to the needs and reading abilities of groups of readers now not adequately provided for.

The public library will stimulate and encourage individual ownership of books, believing the private library plays an important part in the cultural life of the community.

PERSONNEL

The service of the intellectual and cultural interests of the American people through libraries requires large numbers of educated men and women with good personality and special training. They must understand people as well as books. They should know something about the

reading interests and habits of their public. They must know how to share with people their knowledge of books and subjects. Readers' advisory service should be greatly extended so that all readers may have an opportunity to use such service. The librarian who works with the general reader must be something of a sociologist, psychologist, and practical student of community life. He must be trained to work with individuals of many different kinds. The librarian who works with scholars must be a scholar himself.

The librarian who works with children and young people should be conversant with literature and capable of introducing it to them, and should be familiar with the best thought in the educational and in the psychological fields.

The library administrator must be competent to participate in the coördination of all educational, recreational, and cultural agencies in his community. Salaries should be commensurate with education, training, ability, and responsibility.

Schools which are broad enough and specialized enough to train such personnel should be maintained. It is necessary that these schools be constantly adjusting themselves to the changing conditions in order to meet the needs of libraries and society for special types of service, that they should be adequately distributed so that all sections of the country will be served with reasonable ease.

Certification of librarians should be provided for by state law in all states where it is now lacking, as a means of improving library service through raising the standard of library personnel and preventing the appointment of unqualified persons.

BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT

Buildings and equipment should be pro-

vided which are suited to the needs of an expanding program. Plants must be flexible to meet changing conditions and social habits. More study rooms for community activities and discussion groups will be needed. New mechanical devices, photographic equipment for reproducing books, equipment for radio receiving, for the talking book, and other mechanical devices must be installed. The location and design of the building must be such as to encourage use.

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

Internal organization should be controlled by the types of readers and students to be served and should be directed toward encouraging and facilitating use. In research libraries there should be more subject departmentalization, more attention to the specialist and advanced student in the preparation of catalogs and other tools. For the general reader more logical groupings from the reader's point of view may be found; catalogs and bibliographies must be prepared for the non-specialist.

LIBRARY RESEARCH—STUDY OF READERS

Continuous research, experiments, and studies should be carried on locally, in regions and nationally, to improve library organization and methods, to aid in making reading a more nearly universal method of continuing self-education, and to insure constant improvement of the library's contribution to the changing needs of society.

LIBRARY PLANNING COMMITTEES

In each state there should be created a committee of librarians and other citizens to plan for the development of library service within the state in coöperation with the state library agency.