

THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTION AND THE RURAL COMMUNITY:
SOME POSSIBILITIES

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Being "brand new" to the profession of librarianship, as a graduate student in a library science program, I have found myself approaching this topic more as a patron than as a librarian. The majority of my experience has, often times, been as a confused or uninformed student or citizen, wandering the aisles of various public libraries, in search of answers, entertainment, diversion, ideas, excitement, direction, or just some peace and quiet and a place to read and think. Underlying my wanderings was always the unexpressed feeling that this place, housing all these books, must hold the secrets to a happy, fulfilled, exciting life--if I could just discover the secret code to break into its secrets! Now as a hopeful librarian, I find myself anxious to provide the services and programs I had hoped to find as a patron, over my years of library wandering. I began the research for this paper with several questions and purposes in mind: what kinds of services can a library offer to adults to help unlock the mysteries of books; how does a librarian discover a patron's unexpressed needs and desires; how is a connection made between the patron's needs and the library's possibilities; is the situation of the rural public library different than that of other public libraries?

Through my research, I have "met" many wonderful librarians--people I shall probably never meet personally--but I have been introduced to their ideas and thoughts through their writings. As someone coming "late" to the field of librarianship, I am grateful that these people took the time to share their ideas, in writing, with the profession, so that their insights are still available to searchers such as myself. I have discovered that many programs and services have come and gone in the libraries of this country, over the past 136 years.¹ It is gratifying to know that these experiences have not been lost to librarians for the years ahead. I only hope that my sharing of some of their writings, in this paper, will do their thoughts and ideas justice, and demonstrate the respect I have found for the profession I am preparing to enter.

In searching through the literature of librarianship, one discussion comes up again and again: who do we serve? Is the primary job of the librarian in a public library to serve those citizens who enter our facility and request help, or do we have some responsibility to go beyond the library's doors and advertise our services, promote our possibilities, question citizens as to their needs, and then design programming to assist them? In writing this paper, I have chosen to take the latter stand. Having listened to all the arguments of this many-sided debate, I have concluded, as my personal philosophy of librarianship, that a public library is just that--public. It is a tax-supported institution within a particular community setting, and has the mandate

to try to serve all of its citizens, by actively reaching out to the community and presenting its wares. Therefore, the programming and services discussed in this paper, will concern patron and nonpatron--including those people who cannot enter the library due to disability, lack of transportation, personal fears, institutionalization, or incarceration.

Considering the possibilities for programming and services, the librarian can not merely charge ahead and "program." Instead, the constraints of money, time and qualified people must be considered. Especially in the rural library setting, limited resources must be balanced skillfully to achieve effective adult services.

But, I believe there are two other aspects to consider, over and above effective use of library resources. And, unless these are considered and dealt with carefully and effectively, and degree of programming will be unsuccessful--even with access to unlimited library resources.

The library must find out what the citizens want, (and cannot get within this community, at this time,) in the nature of services and programming. And the citizens must find out what the library can offer to them. You cannot ask for something you do not know is possible; you cannot program without consideration of needs--well, you can, but then you complain because "nobody came."

Many librarians have been doing research into the specific needs of rural communities and how to use community analysis to determine these specific needs. Information Needs Assessment

of Rural Groups for Library Program Development, by Daniel Barron and Charles Curran,² is an excellent, step-by-step community analysis program designed specifically for the rural library. It is simple enough in its approach for the small library to tackle, yet the results of the analysis will get at the heart of this particular community's assets and needs. Mr. Curran and Mr. Barron state:

It is very possible that we do not know enough about the individuals and groups in our service communities; especially the nonusers, those individuals who never present their needs to the existing library system's circulation or reference desks, telephone, or bookmobile. In order for us to provide for the information and other library needs of people, we must first know what those needs are. Perhaps we have relied too heavily upon an osmotic form of needs assessment in all our library communities; having lived in a town for a number of years and being active socially, we tend to believe that we just know what the community needs are.

Librarians must develop close and empathetic relationships with the community....We must, however, add to that another dimension, one that will help us assess effectively the expressed needs of people in our community as well as provide for those needs which may not be as easily or clearly articulated. From this assessment, we can develop program alternatives and select those which are most cost-effective and, at the same time, those which can add most significantly to the quality of life for those who live in our community. The subsequent evaluations may also provide, for ourselves, our service community, and our governing bodies, evidence which shows our real and potential effect as a human service institution. The taxpayer and the tax allocator both require more effective communications from us to understand what we are trying to accomplish and that which we could accomplish given the appropriate level of funding. Effective needs assessment is one way that this may be done.³

Not all rural communities have the same characteristics. Studies point to nationwide trends, such as remoteness from social services and agencies, inadequate educational facilities, a higher number of people over 65, and so forth. But each

community has specific assets, a specific population, and specific needs. It is vital for the librarian to do an analysis of this community to know best how to serve these citizens effectively. In any community, the library should never find itself duplicating the efforts of other qualified groups or agencies. This is especially true in the rural community setting, where resources are more limited and limiting.

One characteristic of the rural setting that is mentioned frequently in various studies, and is basically true of all small communities, is the "personalness" of the community. Being smaller in size and complexity, people know each other. They talk to each other on the street, in the stores, at meetings.

Geographic remoteness means a different way of obtaining information. In rural areas, oral communication from neighbors tends to be the primary source of information, due not only to a shortage of organized information services, but also to a lack of knowledge of their existence and belief in their use. Isolation causes alienation and suspicion, a mistrust, of information obtained from the "outside world." Rural peoples tend to be ear-oriented.... They also tend to be person-oriented rather than thing-oriented, which calls for individualization and personalization of materials delivery. Even if information is available, it will not be used unless it is presented in a way that takes into account these characteristics.⁴

As librarians, we must go outside the library building and talk to the citizens. They need to know who we are, what the library is about, what resources it has available for this community, what services and programs it can offer to improve this community's quality of life--this citizen's quality of life. The librarian should also talk to the

Determining Public Needs (Community Analysis) + Informing the Community of Library Possibilities (Person-to-Person) + Community Involvement in Planning/Evaluation

Organizational Commitment to Service
(Based on the Library's Goals, Objectives and Priorities)

Effective evaluation of programming and services can serve as an effective means of continuing community analysis. A need has been discerned, a program has been designed and presented to address this need: what happened? Did the program actually fit the need? Was the need misunderstood? Has a "new" need surfaced as a result of this program? Careful evaluation of what happened in and through this program, by the library staff, the program presentors, and the community representatives who participated in the needs assessment and planning, can lead to the next step, the next program.

Evaluation based purely on the number of participants attending is faulty for many reasons. I would like to suggest the following factors for consideration in the evaluation process:

- (1) Was this program offered to meet a researched, perceived need, for this community?
- (2) Did the library do sufficient outreach and public relations to advertise and explain this program--person-to-person?

other service providers within the community to discover what they are doing currently, how the library can help them, and how they can help the library. As was mentioned earlier, duplication of efforts is not needed in a small community with limited resources.

The person-to-person approach is the most effective means of advertising library programs. Once the citizens know what the possibilities are and the librarian knows what the needs are, effective planning can begin for adult services in this community. Citizens should be invited to serve in an advisory capacity, during actual program planning, as they will know best what delivery of service will be accepted by their community. These citizens will also be the most effective means of promoting the services to the community. And it will be important to obtain their evaluation of the success or failure of the individual program, with recommendations for continued services.

Librarians Rose Vainstein and Margaret Mann have proposed the following adapted diagram of quality public relations:

Determining Public Needs (Community Analysis)	+	Courteous, Effective + Services	+	Stimulation and Informing the Community (Publicity)
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Organizational Commitment to Service
(Based on each Library's Goals, Objective and Priorities)⁵

I would like to suggest that the model prior to this end result, for establishing quality adult services (courteous, effective services) would be:

- (3) Was the material presented with full recognition and respect for the adult learner and his/her particular approaches to learning?⁶
- (4) Was the environment and time frame humane?
- (5) Did the presenter relate well to the participants?
- (6) If only a small number attended, why? Lack of public relations, bad date or time, not a real need in the community, format not comfortable to citizen, too long, too involved, too demanding? Lack of numbers should be seen as a sign of problems with planning, not a conclusion of failure.

Having considered the community analysis process and the rural community setting, what programs and services can the local public library offer to its citizens as possibilities? A search of the library literature soon discloses the answer to this question to be as bottomless and possibility-full as Strega Nona's pasta pot!⁷ Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, I should like to limit our considerations to the area of reading: what programs and services can the library offer its citizens in this use of its collection and the development and enrichment of reading.⁸

Most citizens see the library as a building where books are kept, where they can go to read. But, while this basic aspect of libraries may be common knowledge in a community, there may be much that the library professionals consider to be common knowledge, that is, in fact not known by the community. Some basic concerns and questions citizens may have include: how to get a library card, what requirements

there are for entering this institutional building that looks like an extension of the formal schooling of their past, what the hours are, what questions will be asked of them when they enter that door, how to find a book they would like, what kinds of books this building has, will their needs seem silly or not "educated" enough to the library professionals they have to "go through" to gain access to the collection. We say that everybody knows you can get best sellers and current magazines at the local library--but does everybody really realize this? Do most citizens even know that the library buys paperback books now? Beyond this, do they know about talking books, books on records or cassettes, large print books, low reading level materials?

Do they know that there is a service available called inter-library loan? Do they know how this service works and what it can do for them, personally? Do they know that their privacy is protected within this building, that their requests will be respected and not belittled or discussed with others?

The basic business that the library is about is lending books. To do this effectively, I think the library professionals must go outside of the library walls and "re-introduce" this library's business to this community, in a nonthreatening manner. As librarians we need to break down any barriers that may exist between the local citizens and the library building and the services available within its walls. The natural place to begin is to explain what we have in our collection and what we can get, if our citizens want it--either

through direct purchase or inter-library loan, and how we can deliver these materials to our citizens--in the library service to the homebound or institutionalized or remotely-located citizens. When people begin to see that we care so much about our collection that we'll even bring it to them, that we'll come to their meetings and local gathering places to promote what we have and invite them to come and see us regularly, then the fears of making that first trip behind those imposing doors may be overcome.

Dr. Phyllis Smith, a professor of education, made the following observations in an education class designed to promote reading at the secondary level:

A book is your opportunity to talk personally to this author.

Why don't people read? Maybe because nothing has ever turned them on about books.

We need to be able to respond to a book--to talk back to the author--to argue with him or her.

Books become our friends--I remember what I was doing when I read it, where I was, who I was.

I must be a reader if I want to encourage others to read. It will be my own enthusiasm with reading that will reach others. We must encourage people to become thinking readers. To encourage them to search out many ideas on a topic--don't stick with one book, one set of ideas. Emphasize that there are always more than one idea on a subject. And remember that it isn't how many books you get through, but what books get through to you.⁹

I have been amazed and disappointed that in no library science class, concerned with adult library services, has the joy of reading been discussed. When speaking of library services for adults, all we talk about are information storage and retrieval, reference questions and answers, selection

policy, etc. But no one has ever shared the possibilities and joys of all those books lining library walls. No one has talked about how we, as librarians, can share those beautiful resources with our citizens, in an enthusiastic way.

All of the studies today of the illiteracy problems in our society have brought out some interesting facts about the basic literacy of our society. A new word has been coined: aliteracy--for those people who can read but choose not to read. Research with the elderly in literacy programs has found: "...that elderly who learned to read in literacy programs rarely read for pleasure because they have not been presented with reading as an integral part of their life and enjoyment."¹⁰

This study pointed to basic problems with our society's attitude toward reading. It was brought out that, as a whole, we do not place value on reading in our society. Many parents become uneasy with the child who reads too much. Rather, we emphasize play, sports, and group activities. A person who prefers to spend time alone with a book is viewed as having some social maladjustment, in all age groups. And television viewing is more accepted, in all age groups, than is reading. Even literacy programs aim only for functional literacy:

They typically emphasize the mastery of basic survival, functional, and job related skills. Rarely do they move the participant to the joys of reading the many great works of literature available, or lead the participant to read even current works which might stimulate thought and discussion.¹¹

Or pure enjoyment? If the library's core purpose is books, shouldn't we, as library professionals, be about drawing people to the joy of reading? And how can we do this?

Joni Bodart suggests an excellent method for sharing our enthusiasm about reading and books with our citizens: Booktalking.

What is a booktalk? In the broadest terms, it's what you say to convince someone to read a book. It's what I was doing as far back as grade school and as recently as yesterday when someone said, "Joni, you've read a lot, tell me a good book to read." It's sharing your enjoyment of a book with other people and convincing them that they will enjoy the book, too. A booktalk is not a book review or a book report or a book analysis. It does not judge the book's merits; it assumes the book is good and goes on from there. As a dramatic art, booktalking has something in common with storytelling, although in content it more nearly resembles an unfinished murder mystery--it doesn't say "who dunnit," but it makes you want to find out. A good booktalk reaches out to the listeners and involves them so they become not merely listeners but participants. It makes them care enough about the people in the book to want to read it and see what happens after the end of the talk.

A good booktalk is enticing. It is a come-on. It is entertaining. And it is fun, for both the listener and the booktalker. However, a booktalk should not be better than the book it's about. Overselling a book merely means that your credibility will be reduced for future booktalks. If the first three chapters are slow and the rest of it is great, say so. Don't let your audience think it's great from page one--they may not make it to Chapter Four!¹²

Booktalking is commonly encouraged for adolescent audiences, but what about adult audiences? Wouldn't this be a very professional and entertaining way to share our enthusiasm about reading at a local meeting with adults? Brief and to the point--the point being that their library has these interesting books just waiting for them. A bibliography

of similar books could be handed out, or pasted in the front of the books. Books similar to the ones booktalked could be brought to the presentation and checked out on the spot. Just maybe the enthusiasm of the librarian and her/his desire to surmount the stumbling blocks of hours and in-library service will encourage some people to get in touch with the library again. This technique would also work in nursing homes, hospitals and the local county jail or detention center. A deposit collection could be left there for these potential patrons to use until the next visit. Maybe these efforts would open up the world of books and recreational reading to people who have lost touch with it.

The next step beyond the booktalk is reader guidance--a service common to the early 1900's but little used or encouraged today. Basically this involves being available to answer patron's questions about "What can I read?" It includes knowing authors and their works, being able to identify the subjects and genres of various books, and helping a person to find books that will be interesting to them. Years ago the readers advisor could be asked to work up a reading plan for a patron with a particular interest in a particular area. The patron and the librarian would discuss what the patron was looking for, what they wanted to achieve in their reading and the librarian would use his/her knowledge and background with books and suggest selections to read, over a period of time. Why couldn't the local librarian offer to provide this service today, in the rural community?

In this era of growing computerization and depersonalization of so many types of public service, the librarian's commitment to providing each individual with the materials and assistance especially suited to that person's need or interest reflects a mode to of service increasingly rare. It is this aspect of library service, if adequately known and exploited by the community, which may provide the impetus for continued local financial support in a period of decreasing revenues and escalating costs of all community services.¹³

Eleanor T. Smith feels that adult reader guidance should be the most vital area of library service today, both inside and outside the library.

Taking manned exhibits to community meetings is a golden opportunity nearly always to meet and talk with people who have never been inside the library in their lives. ...once people discover that librarians are human beings, they have no hesitancy in going into a library and asking for guidance.¹⁴

She encourages informal but good presentations to adult groups, with the librarian being available before and after to talk with people socially.

... to achieve success (at reader guidance) librarians must be convinced that it is an important library service, they have to prepare themselves through reading and training for it, and they must make aggressive attempts to revive it. I feel that library directors and other supervisors have a responsibility to make sure that their staff read continuously and purposely and that this can be accomplished both by example and directive.¹⁵

Regular meetings are planned for staff to share what they have read, thereby bringing all the staff up-to-date on some of the library's holdings. This method could work well even in the rural library with perhaps only one professional staff person working with paraprofessionals and volunteers. By sharing what each is discovering and enjoying in their reading, the reading resources of all the staff are increased.

Maybe a monthly dinner or luncheon meeting would be a good place to informally discuss their "findings."

Another enjoyable means of encouraging reading for pleasure is storytelling. While primarily used with children, many people are becoming aware of the value and need for storytelling to adults, today. Indeed, it is a custom we have "lost" as our society has grown more fact-paced and video-oriented.

Michael Burnham has been developing a successful storytelling program with the elderly in the Cincinatti area.

He believes that the listener shapes reality far more than the teller, and that one of the most important tasks of the storyteller is to leave the listener room to shape that reality.

Visualizing--a process of reconstructing the story in scenes or "movies" in the mind--allows the storyteller to step aside and illustrate the tale as it flows past. Burnham hints that visualizing may even ahev a physiological location. To demonstrate the truth of his theory, he asks his students to visualize the White House. This having been done, he says, "Now tell me, how many columns are on the front of it?"

The first task usually makes students relax, tilt their heads back a bit, and try to "see" the White House. When directly questioned about details such as the columns, Burnham states that people usually pull forward, sometimes bringing their hands to their chins or foreheads in the thinking stance captured by Rodin years ago. This "I'm thinking" pose signals an interruption in the communication flowing between the storyteller and his or her listeners.¹⁶

Mr. Burnham has developed a rapport with the elderly he visits regularly in the senior centers and nursing homes. They have come to trust each other and many of the seniors now share some of their own stories with the storyteller--developing an oral tradition of their history.

Storytelling, using books, is another valid means of sharing the joy of reading. Many remotely-located or homebound

citizens could be reached by radio, with a weekly hour program of reading favorite books. "New" resources of books on cassettes and records should be introduced and explained to the citizens, as well as large print books for people who thought they could not read to themselves anymore, due to poor eyesight.

The traditional story-hour and the proven values of lap reading to children can and should extend beyond the children. The joys of storytelling and oral reading further extend the joys of the written word and books to adults.

A program that goes beyond the oral presentation to reach people's memories, is an exciting concept developed by two library science students, called Bi-Folkal Productions, Inc.

This program combines the hearing of the written word with the seeing, touching, smelling, tasting of everyday things, to help the listener become further involved in the reading. Their primary audience was also the elderly in nursing homes, but this type of program would be exciting to any age group. An example of one of their programs, called "Remembering Halloween," follows:

(They) presented a slide show of autumn scenes from the area, and read fall poetry. They dramatized the tale "Thing At the Foot of the Bed," and then donned sheets and rubber masks to conjure up memories of childhood raids on dank October nights. McIntosh applesauce was served so participants could share a taste associated with fall.¹⁷

At the conclusion of their presentation, the "audience" shared their own memories of past Halloween experiences. Other programs have included "Remembering County Fairs,"

"Remembering Train Rides," "Remembering 1924," "Remembering School Days," "Remembering the Depression," "Remembering Farm Days," "Remembering Fall," "Remembering Automobiles," "Remembering Birthdays," "Remembering Summertime," and "Remembering the Home Front (W.W. II)." The participants, visualizing the readings and experiencing the sensual images, open up their own pasts and feelings.

Reminiscence is not an unhealthy preoccupation with the past but is recognized as a natural healing or adaptive process necessary for life review in which unresolved conflicts and events of the past can be re-examined and worked through to some kind of conclusion for each person.¹⁸

Reminiscence is not only something the elderly do. It is a valuable growth process at any age. Programs of this nature, for adolescents and adults--maybe parents and their teenagers--using themes applicable to their own life history, would be excellent ways for promoting personal sharing about personal experiences of individual history and life events. Use of these techniques would be an excellent catalyst for reacting to books--talking back to the author--sharing personal insights and remembrances.

Another method of "...bringing about effective encounters between people and books...."¹⁹ is bibliotherapy: "...using the discussion of literature to stimulate the ability to deal with life more readily or find ways to accept the unchangeable."²⁰

There are many levels of bibliotherapy, from in-depth clinical programs involving the librarian with a psychologist or therapist and the clients, to the librarian and a group

of citizens who just want to explore their world through books. The following four goals have been enumerated for successful bibliotherapy programming:

- (1) To enrich and stimulate the group members' reactions to what lies about us in daily life;
- (2) To help the individual participant gain new insights into self;
- (3) To heighten people's perceptions of their relationships to the people around them;
- (4) To enhance the individual's insights into the world about him or her, awakening people to the reality of the particular life situation and helping the individual deal with what cannot be changed.²¹

Books have much to say to the reader. It is felt that "...the book itself, and the reader's isolated reaction to the written material, does not utilize the full potential of either the literature or the patron."²²

The Great Books Discussion groups of the 1960's and 1970's were a form of bibliotherapy: a group examination of what this author is saying to us today about our life, about our world. In 1980, a project was funded through the National Endowment for the Humanities for several rural Vermont libraries.

This program encouraged citizens to read five books chosen specifically to address a particular theme. This particular project was not modeled on the Chicago Great Books idea. It did not encourage people to read Plato or Dante or Shakespeare. The books chosen were modern novels written by prominent authors, several of whom were from Vermont. How did the program work? The librarians in these towns remarked to their patrons, "We are going to read these books. Would you like to join us?" The grant bought paperback editions to give away. This program was loosely based on the

RIF (Reading is Fundamental) program. Scholars from nearby academic institutions in both New Hampshire and Vermont, met together and planned ways of presenting this program in a curriculum mode. They went to rural areas to hold discussion groups. These discussion groups were not very successful to begin with. At first only four or five people came to the discussions. After they discovered that the discussions concentrated on literary themes, more people began to attend. Attendance rose to 40 or 45. In one instance, an entire town of 150 people attended the book discussion at the local library.²³

Another successful project sponsored in Vermont involved a study of genre literature. Patrons read westerns and learned to distinguish between good books and mediocre books. They learned to judge books by evaluating the strength of the plot. They found that good books did not just deal with tales of white horses and black costumed cowboys, but that they communicated the values of American life.²⁴

There are many possibilities for sharing the worlds found in books. I believe it is important for the local library to let its citizens know the opportunities for programming that can be available through their library--to let its citizens know about the books it houses. Especially within the rural community, where opportunities for cultural activities and adult enrichment are limited, programs that widen the world of the reader could be welcomed. Programming does not have to be elaborate or costly--just people coming together to share common interests and search for answers to common questions; people coming together to talk personally to the author, to argue with him/her, to get turned on by books.

As part of our community analysis, special groups within our service area, and their special needs, would be discovered. I would like to share some ideas for serving the reading needs of three of these groups that would probably be present in most communities, rural or otherwise: the adult who

is aging (and active, or homebound, or institutionalized), the adult who is incarcerated in a local jail, and the adult who is illiterate.

Perhaps the most important aspect of library service to all three of these groups would be the library's attitude toward them and its commitment to serving them. I think it can be dangerous and shortsighted to make blanket statements as to the needs of people in these three groups. As citizens, these people are entitled to the same levels of library service as any other citizen. And they are entitled to be served as individuals with individual needs.

One asset the elderly and the incarcerated have to their "benefit" is time: time to read and think and reflect. Without access to the library's collection and programming much of this time can turn to boredom and loneliness. It is important that the library professionals approach these citizens with respect and a knowledge of their basic problems, and a real knowledge of what services the library can offer to them. For the aging this could include large print books, books on records or cassettes, deposit collections, special delivery of materials.

Because our society takes a negative view of aging, the aged are often placed in positions of diminished power irrespective of their actual abilities. The world around them is changing rapidly, and the ideals and values they have held throughout their lives are challenged and changed. It is difficult enough for those of us who are younger to adjust to change. It is even more difficult when the physical effects of aging and loss of family members and friends through death have weakened the individual's psychological support system. It is little wonder that depression is a common problem among the aged. Depression in the aged is recognized as a quite normal response

to drastic changes in the individual's life, and there is evidence that neither intelligence nor memory are diminished by the aging process to the extent that is commonly assumed. The aged need to know that they can still make contributions to society--and society as well needs this knowledge. To the extent that the aged have learned to adapt to the changes in their lives, they have much to teach those of us who are still learning. They can and should be information givers as well as information seekers.²⁵

An interview with Dolores Hignite, a gerontological social worker and activities director at a nursing home in a rural Michigan town, enforces the fact that people are people and their needs are basically simple and straight forward. Mrs. Hignite shared that her residents would enjoy programming that involved puppet shows or storytelling of interesting stories, having a book read to them during a visit, having a deposit collection geared to their individual reading interests, that was clearly labeled by subject, containing large print books, and that was changed regularly (monthly). She further suggested the possibility of having book reading clubs, with the librarian bringing good books in the areas of interest to each club: mystery, westerns, romance, sports. Regular meetings could be scheduled, with a discussion of what each member is reading. These club members would enjoy presenting their ideas to other residents and to family members: Why I like to read these types of books. When I began reading these books. My favorite book is ...because....

Mrs. Hignite further explained that since 1972 all nursing homes in the United States must employ an activities director. This person would be the best contact person for the local librarian and would enjoy knowing that the local library

was interested in the needs of their residents. Most activities directors would appreciate having the librarian "train" them in storytelling and book discussion skills, so that the director could continue programs regularly on their own, with the residents.²⁶

The greatest constraint to truly outstanding library service and programs for older Americans is not lack of external materials but the lack of an internal positive understanding of and attitude toward older people.²⁷

The above quote could be restated in relation to the incarcerated adult, as well. The humanities collection in the local public library is very important to a person trying to resolve her/his relationship with society. And recent court decisions have mandated that these collections and services be made readily available to people in county jails.²⁸ In the rural community, the needs of the local jails must be considered as part of service to its citizens. Certainly a deposit collection and special methods of material's delivery will have to be considered. At the very least, the library should also advise the inmates of the programming and services it offers to its citizens and allow the incarcerated citizen the opportunity to become involved.

A good example of the needs found in the local county jail can be shown in a recent program in Clarion county. The sheriff of the local county jail contacted the Education Department of Clarion University and asked if any students would be willing to meet with his prisoners and help them with their reading needs. A questionnaire was prepared and given to each inmate, to determine specific needs to

match with student abilities. Overwhelmingly, the inmates wanted access to books, to ideas, to society. Sad that the sheriff never considered contacting the local library; sadder still that the local library did not consider contacting the sheriff and inmates.²⁹

As one librarian has noted: "...those in penal institutions are twice disadvantaged: they are alienated from society and from the education, recreational, and health facilities of society."³⁰ And yet we expect these people to magically rejoin society one day as effective citizens.

Moving on to the third special needs group, it is pretty obvious what the adult who is illiterate needs in the way of programming--and it is also obvious that the public library is the last place they would look for this help. If you cannot read, why go to a building full of books? A building that looks suspiciously like the school building you had so much difficulty with years ago? But as more is learned about how people learn to read, the obvious is becoming obscure. Literacy is finally being seen as a process, not a destination. As Goethe commented years ago: "People do not know how long it takes to learn to read. I have been at it all my life and I cannot yet say I have reached the goal."

Beyond the role a local library may choose to play in adult literacy education, the library has a basic role to address in introducing the adult with reading problems to the world of books and literature. Where else is this person ever going to discover the true joy of reading? Basic literacy

classes are teaching students functional literacy: how to get a driver's license, how to fill out a form, how to read the TV guide, how to write down directions or a phone number. The library needs to seek out these beginning adult readers and invite them in, help to make them feel comfortable and welcome within the library's walls, and show them the wonderful collection available to them as citizens. Special materials should be available to them in the form of a good high interest/low reading level collection. But they should also be invited to participate in programming to become familiar with literature. After all, we are all still learning to read and all of the booktalking programs, the book discussion programs, the storytelling programs have been about our continued growth in literacy. Perhaps, if these "beginning readers" realized that in many ways we are all beginning readers, they would be able to let go of some of their very real fears at being "put down" by the adult community at large, and would want to join us as we all pursue literacy.

How literate is literate? And if one attains that blessed state, what can one expect to change in one's life? The myths are pervasive and dangerous. They limit our capacity to see all the possibilities and tempt us to generalize. For these reasons we must resist them, even at the expense of clever formulas and prescriptions. Literacy seems to be less a destination than a process. It is a way of seeing and thinking supported by skills and affected by the learning and social experiences and the self-esteem of one seeking to attain it.³¹

...most adult literacy programs and instructional materials and practices ignore the fact that facility, power, and range in reading and writing ability do not spring like Athena from Zeus's head. Most adult literacy programs and materials are based on the assumption, either explicitly or implicitly stated, that literacy can develop in a relatively short period

of time. Literacy acquisition is a gradual, long-term developmental process....³²

Having considered a wide variety of programming possibilities, how do we reach the citizens with these programs? Remoteness and vast traveling distances being a given in rural areas, the first possibility that comes to mind is the librarian traveling to meet the citizens, instead of the citizens coming to the library. Programming can be offered in facilities that are convenient to a large group of people, and programs may have to be given in several locations to reach a wide number of people. Effective community analysis would help the library discover where people and needs are centered. Including local people in planning will also help in deciding upon effective delivery systems.

Making the collection more accessible to a wider number of citizens may mean changing library hours to fit better with local work and free-time schedules. It will certainly mean the consideration and use of deposit collections around the service area, bookmobiles and books-by-mail possibilities.

In the rural community there may be no local movie theater, no stage theater, no art museum, no historical museum, no college or university. Citizens' contact with the world may be limited to newspapers and magazines, and the limited radio and television reception. Contact with ideas, art, and the humanities may be limited to whatever the local educational system or churches or civic organization can offer through programming. And here sits the library, with its collection of books. What can--what should--this institution

do within this community? It can choose to hold fast to the status quo--to house the collection and be reactive in its service to patrons. Only those people who walk through its doors and ask for specific items will be served.

I would like to suggest, from the vantage point of the ideas and thoughts, dreams and programs of dedicated librarians, past and present, that the library's role within the rural community can and should be active and outgoing. It can be alive with possibilities, making its collection and the talents of its staff available to all the community's citizens. But, first and foremost, it must take these possibilities to the people, person-to-person, people-to-people, and introduce what the library is all about. As Thomas Phelps of the National Endowment for the Humanities states:

Librarians hold "pride of place" as an institution of the humanities. They house our books, records, and thoughts. How can these materials be accessed? As librarians, you should be concerned with facilitating access to these materials. Our mission is to encourage reading, discussion, and interpretation of humanistic themes.

Your patrons want to participate in these programs, but often they just don't know how to become involved. Rural Libraries should be one of the primary access points because they represent the only network in America that is constant. They are the only facilities in most small towns that offer the this type of cultural activity. They provide more than just everyday information. They provide thought-provoking information and that is important.³³

NOTES

1. Dating from 1851 and the beginning of programming at the Boston Public Library.

2. Daniel Barron and Charles Curran. Information Needs Assessment of Rural Groups for Library Program Development (Columbia, South Carolina: South Carolina University, 1979) ED176 790.

3. Daniel Barron and Charles Curran, "Needs Assessment and Rural Libraries," Ohio Media Spectrum 30 (October 1978): 38.

4. Ann Hayes Drennan and Anne Shelby, "Library and Information Service Needs of the Geographically Remote," Library and Information Service Needs of the Nation, ed. Carlos A Cuadra and Marcia J. Bates (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), p. 172.

5. Rose Vainstein and Margaret Mann, "An Historic Perspective on Adult Services in American Public Libraries," in Public Libraries and New Directions for Adult Services, ed. Joan C. Durrance and Rose Vainstein (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1981), p. 16-17.

6. Lynn E. Birge, Serving Adult Learners: A Public Library Tradition, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1981), p. 156-160.

7. Tomie dePaola, Strega Nona: An Old Tale, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1975).

8. This would exclude the consideration of adult programming and services in the following areas: reference, information and referral, educational programming, cultural programming, literacy education programs.

9. Phyllis W. Smith, Ph.D., Professor, Education, Clarion University, Clarion, Pennsylvania.

10. Albert Kingston, "Does Literacy Really Enhance the Lives of the Elderly?" Reading World 20 (March 1981): 170.

11. Ibid., p. 171.

12. Joni Bodart, Booktalk! 2: Booktalking For All Ages and Audiences, (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1985), p. 2-3.

13. Birge, Serving Adult Learners, p. 138.

14. Eleanor T. Smith, "Reader Guidance: Are We Sitting Down On the Job?" Illinois Librarian 48 (September, 1966): 531.

15. Ibid., p. 529, 532.
16. Diane Johnson, "Storytelling to the Elderly," Wilson Library Bulletin 55 (April 1981): 594-595.
17. Jane Spear, "Over By the Memories," Wisconsin Library Bulletin (Fall 1983): 119.
18. Ibid., p. 121.
19. Evalene P. Jackson, "Bibliotherapy and Reading Guidance: A Tentative Approach to Theory," Library Trends 11 (October 1962): 118.
20. Arleen M. Hynes, "Bibliotherapy and the Aging," Catholic Library World (February 1979): 284.
21. Ibid., p. 281-282.
22. Ibid., p. 280.
23. Thomas Phelps, "The Future of NEH Programming," in Trends In Humanities Programming. ed. Bernard Vavrek and Lorilyn Whitney (Clarion, PA: Clarion University, 1984), p. 31-32.
24. Ibid., p. 33.
25. Linda Lucas, "Information Needs of the Aging," The Southeastern Librarian 30 (Winter 1980): 184.
26. Dolores Hignite, Activities Director, Mary-James Nursing Home, Montrose, MI.
27. Wendy Robinson, "Meeting the Psychological and Social Needs of Older Adults: The Library's Role," Drexel Library Quarterly (April 1979): 10.
28. Jane Pool, "Public Library Services to Correctional Facilities," Library Trends 26 (Summer 1977): 145.
Brennerman vs Madigan: Persons in pretrial detention must have access to the same tax-supported community services as did those persons free on bail, including library services and reading materials.
Collins vs Schoonfield: The jail library collection was inadequate for indigent inmate readers.
Jones vs Wittenberg: The sheriff must provide library services to prisoners.
29. "Education For Local Inmates: Program Helps Prepare Clarion Prisoners for the Outside World." Clarion (Pennsylvania) News 9 (April, 1987).

30. Earle McCullough, "Rationale In Support of Library Services In Penal Institutions Provided By Public Libraries With Some Advantages and Problems Involved." New Jersey Libraries 12 (September 1979): 11.

31. Anne Eberle and Sandra Robinson, The Adult Illiterate Speaks Out: Personal Perspectives On Learning To Read and Write (Washington, D.C.: National Institute For Community Development, 1980): 45.

32. Francis E. Kazemek, "Functional Literacy Is Not Enough: Adult Literacy Is A Developmental Process," Journal of Reading (January 1985): 332.

33. Phelps, Trends in Humanities Programming, p. 31, 35-36.

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