

REGIONAL REPORTS

With this issue of RURAL LIBRARIES we introduce a new feature, REGIONAL REPORTS. Librarians from around the country have submitted reports of projects and services that have been successful. This forum for the exchange of ideas will, hopefully, become a regular part of this publication and we look forward to hearing from more of you in the future.

-Editor-

-Library Aids the Deaf-

The Watertown South Dakota Lions Club donated a device to the Watertown Regional Library that helps many area residents reach out and touch someone, according to Margery A. Tauber, director of the regional library.

The device is known as a TDD--telecommunications device for the deaf--and allows the deaf to communicate by telephone. The person checking out the TDD can use it with his own telephone. The messages are typed out and receiving units are used to decode the sound signals at the other end of the line. The local Lions Club provided the TDD to the Library for deaf patrons to check out. The TDDs are in limited supply, and costly--about \$600 each.

Of all the audio-visual equipment the library has obtained through the years, this is the most unique, and an item which is greatly appreciated, Tauber said. Through newspaper articles, and word-of-mouth, the TDD is getting good circulation and has been a great addition to services at the Watertown Regional Library.

The same library district offered patrons the chance to learn about the computer age during the summer of 1983. The school district loaned the library two Commodore PET 4032 microcomputers for the summer. With the computers were instruction books, workbooks and program cassettes to help anyone learn the fundamentals of operating a computer. Patrons were also encouraged to bring cassettes and write their own programs. Tauber's staff reported the computers were in use about 90 percent of the time.

-Medical Library 'Reaches Out', Too-

Access to information for health professionals in rural areas is a major concern of the medical field, according to Debbie Ketchell, Savitt Medical Library, University of Nevada, Reno. As a result, the Outreach Services program of Savitt Medical Library was created to provide rural practitioners with the same information available to their urban counterparts. Rural health professionals now have the same access to the latest developments in patient care, research, continuing education and health services planning.

This program began in April 1982 and is supported in part by contributions from state physicians to the American Medical Association's Education and Research Foundation. The program offers direct access at little or no cost to health care professionals who work in Nevada and on California's eastern slope of the Sierra mountains. Those taking advantage of the program include physicians, assistants, nurses, hospital staff, health department personnel and fourth-year medical students on rural clerkships. Services provided are document delivery, reference, and library development. In addition to serving as a backup resource for materials, Savitt Library provides personnel backup to hospital librarians by serving as the "buddy" for new on-

line searchers by jointly presenting MEDLINE demonstrations and other workshops to hospital staff.

A computer-generated health sciences audio-visuals list is also being developed for the outreach territory with assistance from the systems office, Ketchell said. Furthermore, Outreach Services acts as the liaison for the Library to the School of Medicine's community-based clinical departments.

-Oklahoma: Rural Library Status-

According to Blane Dessy, consultant, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, over 90% of the public libraries in Oklahoma may be classified as rural, using the definition of a service area population of 25,000 or less. Of these libraries, there are two types: those who have joined together into consolidated multi-county library systems and those who have remained unaffiliated with any larger unit of service.

Because Oklahoma's multi-county library systems (of which there are six) are supported by a levy of 1-4 mils on assessed property values, the rural libraries in these systems have progressed at a faster rate than would have happened otherwise. Newer and improved library collections, more staff, longer hours of service, and programming are only a few of the many improvements made by libraries in systems. In addition, there is generally a back-up reference service whereby the smaller rural libraries can refer a query to the system headquarters library for answering. Also each multi-county library system provides an outreach service for rural residents, with either books-by-mail or bookmobile service.

Those rural public libraries which are unaffiliated with multi-county systems continue to experience the problems which are common to many libraries-tentative and/or inadequate funding, few staff, rapidly aging collec-

tions, limited services, and no larger library structure in which to seek assistance, (except for the statewide interlibrary loan service and toll free WATS line to the state library.) Another problem for many of Oklahoma's rural libraries is the geographic distances involved in travel which makes attendance at workshops, conferences, and other events difficult.

Due to some of the inherent problems of Oklahoma's rural libraries, both those in systems and those unaffiliated, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (the state library) provides many services and grant opportunities in addition to its state aid grant program, interlibrary loan service, and toll free telephone number. A staff of nine librarians plus support staff in the Library Services Branch provide information and consultant service and grant opportunities for rural as well as urban libraries.

For example, publications include a monthly adult programs newsletter, a bimonthly annotated bibliography of quality children's books, available library education listings, an annual directory of public libraries and statistics, and a film catalog detailing the state library's film collection available for loan. Some recent grant opportunities for rural libraries have included shared acquisition and cooperation projects, construction grants (LSCA Title II), library school scholarships and continuing education grants, a shared library director's project, reference collection development grants, juvenile collection development grants and adult programming seed money grants. Also available are traveling adult program exhibits and manuals, a juvenile evaluation center comprised of both new and the best in children's literature, an annual statewide summer reading program, on-going workshops and seminars, and a comprehensive library and information sciences collection.

Perhaps the one project which has created the greatest interest and which may possess the greatest potential for rural libraries is the performance measure project currently underway. Developed to create new state public library standards by means of performance (output) measures, the measures project is also generating new and exciting local data for public libraries in Oklahoma. Eventually, every public library in Oklahoma will have completed the series of performance measures which will not only refresh state standards data, but which can also be used by public libraries to plan for increased library responsiveness to their communities. This is particularly applicable to rural libraries which have no consistent history of comprehensive planning for library services, Dessy said.

In summation, rural libraries in Oklahoma are much like rural libraries elsewhere; the problems exist, of course, but the potential of Oklahoma's rural libraries is limited only by the imagination, zeal, and efforts of the rural librarians themselves.

Adult Literacy Service: A Foreshadowing
of Sweeping Change for the Kentucky Library

The Field Service Division of the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives used LSCA money to initiate an Adult Literacy Service Program through public libraries.

Pilot projects started two years ago in Kentucky River Regional Library Development District and the Northern Kentucky Regional Library DD, Don Amburgey and Phil Carrico, Regional Librarians respectively.

The Kentucky River Region being located in rural East Kentucky, the Appalachian heartland, served as a spotlight focusing upon the compelling need for adults and high school drop-outs to learn to read.

Our program was called ALERT: signifying warning, danger and commanding one to stop and reflect upon just what it means to be unable to read, write or do math even at a fifth grade level.

The need was apparant. Many courthouses hold mineral deeds signed by an x, bankers reported that many checks today require witnesses on endorsement and numbers of high school graduates wanted to join ALERT to learn to read. These facts were documented. Laubach Literacy Action, Syracuse, N.Y., reported 20% of adults nationally were functionally illiterate while the ARC (Appalachia Regional Commission) office in Washington, D.C., reported the figure at over 30% for Appalachia. And locally at least 30% remained unregistered at the public library.

To start the programs all public library and bookmobile employees as well as all Boards of Trustees in the eight-county region committed themselves to this experimental project. The regional librarian and the regional literacy co-ordinator, Lois Gross, held exploratory discussions with all newspaper editors, radio and T.V. station managers and those boards of education which were receptive to the idea. Backing was granted. Later contacts secured support from all social service agencies, governmental agencies, key individuals, volunteer tutors and even prospective adult students. The program got underway at well publicized open meetings held every Friday night in libraries.

One major goal was to bring to the adult non-reader the blessings of literacy which is like giving sight to the blind. It is a shock to the non-reader to suddenly open to them the world of the printed page. Learning the English language beginning at zero level is for a non-reader what learning Russian is to a literate person.

Further down the road the libraries would gain new readers.

Lois uses the Laubach way of learning to read employing the principle of each one teach one. The ratio of tutors to students is one-to-one. Lessons are scheduled between tutor and student where the student feels most comfortable. Sensitive adults elect to be taught at home for one hour per week plus homework. Others elect convenient places of study like the library, church or community center.

The grapevine is now coming to our aid in public relations. An adult student learning to read is better able to identify others of his or her kind. This is a good way to spread the word regarding the program.

Lois Gross, co-ordinator, ever and always inspires her tutors at workshops in teaching the Laubach method of reading. She does the same for students in direct conversation. They both are made to feel that there is love and compassion felt for them. Most always these emotions are reciprocal. Without this kind of rapport, a program of this nature does not survive. Society has already turned off the adult student once. Success requires a pervasive, compassionate presence.

During the past two years, this has resulted in some 1,500 people totally committed to volunteer teaching and learning. We have to date enrolled 700 tutors, 700 students and 100 recruiters from various walks of life. Recruiters are bankers, library personnel, staff of health and welfare agencies, human resources, agencies having to do with hard-core unemployed, economic development districts, boards of education and others.

Adults give varied reasons for desiring to learn to read and write. The following ones are representative: to get or regain a lost job as grocery store clerk, to be a waitress or automobile mechanic, to get into vocational

school or a GED class, read the Bible, newspaper, personal letter, endorse checks, shop at supermarkets, fill out job applications, secure operators license and finally to be able to read books from the library.

We recently visited all large coal mining offices to personally sell the idea to personnel and safety directors. Their attitude was highly positive and they appeared to have been expecting us. They have some miners in need of learning to read and others in maintenance work who need to be able to read their service manuals. In addition to the obvious personal benefits, this helps protect the employer against insurance liability.

Some of our literacy students are now registered at the public libraries, checking out their own books and enjoying having reached one goal in their personal life: learning to read and write including some basic arithmetic through fifth grade level. Our program is designed to do only this basic job. Then they are referred to other higher programs of learning if they so choose.

In our region, this process is tending to democratize library service by registering for the first time those outside mainstream America.

The school, the library and mainstream society must all work to eradicate functional illiteracy in the U.S. This figure currently stands at 25,000,000 people.

The issue has been enjoined and from the battle there can be no retreat!