

or more. In a few cases the enumerators reported an indefinite number of books, such as "some," "few," and "several," so that an accurate average cannot be computed. However, on the basis of the number of books reported, the average per family is more than 10 books.

Information secured by visits to 282 homes of Negro families in Limestone County, Alabama, which is in the same part of the state as Walker County, shows that 69 per cent of the families had no books, while 25 per cent had fewer than 25 books.<sup>2</sup>

*Bookstores and rental libraries.*—It is a well-known fact among booksellers that residents of the South as a section are not large purchasers of general books.<sup>3</sup> In each of the demonstration counties there are one or more stores which handle books for sale or for rent. The places where books are sold vary from small collections of inexpensive books in the ten-cent stores to representative collections in the larger cities; similarly, rental libraries range from the familiar collections of mediocre fiction in drug stores to relatively large collections of varied and substantial works.

THE DATA ON READING

In each of the demonstration counties, reading reports were secured from a number of individuals. The blank on which the information was reported asked for the title and source of books, magazines, and periodicals read during the last week, and an estimate of the approximate number of hours spent in each type of reading over a typical week. The form for school pupils carried space for grade, age, sex, and the name of the school; while the blank for adults asked for the occupation, sex, and number of years of schooling at each level.

*Sources of data.*—In each county an effort was made to get returns from groups of adults and from a representative sampling of school pupils, white and Negro, urban and rural, and in two or more school levels. The fifth and sixth grades were taken as most representative of the elementary school; the eighth grade, of the junior high school;

<sup>2</sup> These data were gathered under the direction of Dr. Charles Johnson, of Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee.

<sup>3</sup> Addison Hibbard, "The South's Reading Public," *Publishers' Weekly*, CX, No. 25 (December 18, 1926), 2253-56.

and the tenth, of the high school. In some cases there were variations from this general pattern, particularly in rural schools, where it was frequently impossible to get a sufficiently large number of reports from a single grade. The sample of reports from school pupils

TABLE XXII  
NUMBER OF READING REPORTS FROM EACH GROUP

GROUP	11 DEMONSTRATION COUNTIES		2 SOUTHERN NON-DEMONSTRATION COUNTIES		2 CALIFORNIA COUNTIES
	White	Negro	White	Negro	
Grades V and VI:					
Urban, male.....	472	208	46	14	25
Urban, female.....	472	334	74	25	15
Rural, male.....	338	148	47	22	7
Rural, female.....	371	170	46	32	9
Grades VII, VIII, and IX:					
Urban, male.....	420	145	37	21	68
Urban, female.....	489	258	47	31	63
Rural, male.....	222	69	76	34	109
Rural, female.....	245	110	85	44	105
Grades X and XI:					
Urban, male.....	286	149	24	21	103
Urban, female.....	273	225	23	31	119
Rural, male.....	247	52	94	20	31
Rural, female.....	281	83	90	11	33
Adult:					
Urban, male.....	347	80	.....	.....	.....
Urban, female.....	333	174	.....	.....	38
Rural, male.....	82	108	10	21	.....
Rural, female.....	215	246	19	53	.....
Total.....	5,093	2,559	718	380	725

is considerably larger than that from adults, particularly in the non-Rosenwald counties. In securing reports from adults, it was necessary to resort largely to reports from members of organizations of various types which held meetings during the period of the visits of the writers. In a number of cases arrangements were made during the visit, and the reading reports were filled out at a later date.

In the eleven demonstration counties, 5,093 usable reports were secured from whites; of this number, 977 were from adults. From



Negroes 2,559 usable reports were secured; 608 of these were from adults. Records of reading were also secured from residents of four counties outside of the demonstration area, using the same general procedures. Of these, Rowan, North Carolina, and Davidson, Tennessee, do not have county libraries, and the only organized book service to rural residents is through the schools. The two California counties included (Kern and Marin) have county library service, and many of the schools have their own libraries.

Table XXII shows the distribution, according to color, school level, residence, and sex, of the reports secured for the study from 9,475 persons. The original tabulations were made by individual counties, with returns for the groups based on color, residence, school level, and sex kept separate; but it was found to be impractical to report the data in such detail. Returns from the eleven demonstration counties have therefore been combined, with data for whites and Negroes reported separately, and the groups based on school level, residence, and sex, maintained. Various combinations of these groups are made in the tables which follow. In general, groups have been combined when such a procedure led to simplicity without obscuring important differences among the groups. The data represent samples, both of the population and of the reading period. The computations are based on groups large enough to give reasonably reliable samples. Returns from adults, since they do not take account of such factors as amount of education and occupation, which are generally assumed to influence the amount and type of reading, are probably somewhat less valid than the data for school pupils.

*Treatment of data.*—The sources of reading materials which were tabulated include: the public library and community branches, school libraries and school branches of the public library, the book truck (direct circulation), home, purchased from store or newsstand, rental library, borrowed from friends, gift, college and special libraries, and miscellaneous and unidentified sources.

More than 22,000 books were listed by persons filling out the reading reports. Even with a high proportion of duplication in titles, it was obviously impossible to analyze the reading on the basis of specific title and author. Since the subjects of more than 19,000 non-fiction titles withdrawn from the library have been analyzed

TABLE XXIII

## DEFINITION OF TYPES OF BOOKS\*

JUVENILE: Children's books, for children below the high-school level

Easy (a) for children of the third grade and below

Fiction

b) Listed in recognized lists of children's books, as follows: *Children's Catalog* and *Supplement*, children's books in *A.L.A. Catalog, Booklist Books* for 1931, 1932, and 1933, and children's books in *Graded List of Books for Children* by Nora Beust.

c) Not listed, but of *similar* quality

d) Not listed, *series* and similar titles

e) Not listed, fictionized *cartoons*, motion-picture editions, joke books, and similar titles

Non-fiction

f) Fairy tales, myths, and legends

h) All other non-fiction

ADULT: Books for persons of high-school age and above

Fiction

j) Listed in *A.L.A. Catalog* and *Supplement*, and *Booklist Books* for 1931, 1932, and 1933

k) Not listed, of high literary merit (*substantial*)

l) Not listed, *good modern*

m) Not listed, *adventure*, mystery, and western

n) Not listed, *light love stories*

Non-fiction

g) The Bible

o) All other non-fiction

AUTHORS OR TITLES TYPICAL OF CERTAIN TYPES OF FICTION:

d) The Alger books, the Rover Boys, etc.

e) *Little Orphan Annie*, *Buck Rogers*, etc.

k) Unlisted titles of Dickens, Conrad, Hamsun, etc.

l) Unlisted titles of such writers as Cather, Morley, and Churchill

m) Unlisted titles by such authors as Edgar R. Burroughs, Edgar Wallace, and Zane Grey

n) Unlisted titles by such authors as Ethel M. Dell, Temple Bailey, and Faith Baldwin

\* The words in italics in the fiction classes will be used in the tables and discussion which follow as abbreviations of the types of books as here defined.



(Table XXI presents these data), it was decided to limit the analysis of the books reported primarily to fiction.

Classifications of fiction reported for various other studies were found to be unsuited to the purposes of this report. The two chief characteristics desired in the fiction classification were objectivity and some differentiation of literary quality. Both of these desirable characteristics were secured to a considerable extent when it was decided to begin the description of fiction read by checking the titles against one or more lists generally accepted by the library profession. Table XXIII shows all of the types of books which were used in the study, and the lists used as criteria.

A valuable consensus of opinion was made available for use in the classification of fiction which was not listed by the co-operation of the staff of the *Booklist* of the American Library Association and librarians in the Chicago area. The records in the office of the *Booklist* include the opinions of reviewers on thousands of titles submitted for consideration in connection with the lists published by American Library Association. A long list of books of series type not recommended for circulation by the Chicago Public Library and lists of the fictionized cartoon strips and "big little books" secured from ten-cent stores and from publishers represented in these stores furnished the starting-point in building up check-lists of these types of juvenile fiction.

The classification of fiction is not considered in any sense as an ideal one, nor is it presented as a systematic or exhaustive study of the subject. It was developed because it was felt that the grouping of all fiction, which composes the larger part of library circulation, into a single gross figure does not present a sufficiently detailed picture of the types of books most commonly read.

#### JUVENILE FICTION

The distribution of the juvenile fiction of each type read by elementary (Grades V and VI) and junior high school (Grades VII-IX) students is shown in Table XXIV. Children's books are also found among the titles reported by high-school pupils and by adults, but the numbers are relatively small and are not included in the

table. The average number of books per person is somewhat higher for urban than for rural students, and for girls than for boys of the same school levels.

Listed and similar titles make up about 55 per cent of the total read by white students in Grades V and VI, and about 62 per cent

TABLE XXIV  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF JUVENILE FICTION TITLES  
OF EACH TYPE READ BY ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR  
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

GROUP	NUMBER OF TITLES	AVERAGE PER PERSON	PERCENTAGE OF EACH TYPE READ BY EACH GROUP			
			Listed	Similar	Series	Cartoon
White--Grades V and VI:						
Male, urban.....	718	1.5	41	6	27	26
Male, rural.....	385	1.1	43	7	28	22
Female, urban.....	883	1.9	47	7	30	16
Female, rural.....	528	1.4	55	10	20	15
White--Grades VII-IX:						
Male, urban.....	534	1.3	44	8	27	21
Male, rural.....	210	1.0	58	11	18	13
Female, urban.....	681	1.4	55	11	28	6
Female, rural.....	211	0.9	62	8	27	3
Negro--Grades V and VI:						
Male, urban.....	236	1.1	39	8	11	42
Male, rural.....	40	0.3	53	17	17	13
Female, urban.....	321	1.0	46	8	13	33
Female, rural.....	93	0.5	58	9	24	9
Negro--Grades VII-IX:						
Male, urban.....	109	0.8	65	10	8	17
Male, rural.....	25	0.4	36	20	40	4
Female, urban.....	199	0.8	71	9	10	10
Female, rural.....	73	0.7	44	22	33	1

for Grades VII-IX. The increase in listed books at the higher school level is accompanied by considerable decrease in the proportion of reading of fictionized cartoons. Slightly more than one-fourth of the titles are of the series type, and this figure is fairly constant for both boys and girls, urban and rural.

The proportions of listed and similar titles read by Negroes compare favorably with those for whites, although the averages are



smaller for the former group. More than one-third of the fiction titles read by urban Negroes in the fifth and sixth grades are the cartoon or similar type. The reading of rural students consists of more non-fiction than fiction, so that the number of titles of the latter type is small. The reading of juvenile fiction persists into the tenth- and eleventh-grade and adult groups. Approximately one-fourth of the books reported by the former and 15 per cent by the latter group consist of juvenile titles, chiefly fiction. Juvenile titles are reported by 4 per cent of the urban adult males, 11 per cent of the urban females, and by 18 and 25 per cent, respectively, of rural males and females.

TABLE XXV  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ALL JUVENILE FICTION ACCORDING TO TYPE

GROUP	NUMBER OF TITLES	PERCENTAGE OF EACH TYPE			
		Listed	Similar	Series	Cartoons
White:					
11 demonstration counties...	4,450	49.0	8.7	26.5	15.8
2 southern counties.....	840	37.5	6.1	28.9	27.5
2 California counties.....	700	34.3	13.6	43.1	9.0
Negro:					
11 demonstration counties...	1,441	54.1	9.9	16.9	19.1
2 southern counties.....	230	37.8	12.6	16.1	33.5

Comparison of the distribution of juvenile fiction titles among the three groups of counties—the eleven demonstration counties, two southern non-demonstration counties, and two California counties—is made in the data of Table XXV. The demonstration group leads in the proportion of listed and similar titles reported by whites, while this figure for the two southern counties not taking part in the demonstration is the lowest of the three groups. The returns from the California counties show the highest proportion of reading in series and similar books (43.1 per cent) and the lowest proportion (9.0 per cent) of fictionized cartoons. The two non-demonstration southern counties are particularly high in the latter type, more than one-fourth of the titles being in this group.

Returns from Negroes in the two southern groups show that the

percentage of the combined listed and similar titles is significantly higher in the demonstration group, that the proportion of series titles is approximately the same, and that the percentage of fictionized cartoon titles is much smaller in the demonstration group than in the non-demonstration group.

Analysis of the juvenile fiction reported by white students in Grades V and VI and VII-IX, by sex and residence, shows, for the non-demonstration counties, trends similar to those described for the demonstration areas. That is, the percentage of listed and similar titles tends to be higher in Grades VII-IX and for rural students, and the figure for girls above that for boys. The two southern counties show especially high proportions of reading of the fictionized cartoon strips in the elementary-school level, the figure being as high as 61 per cent for urban boys in the Grades V and VI. The very low proportion of this type of reading in the California returns is particularly striking.

Reports concerning the fiction read by Negroes in the non-demonstration counties who were below the high-school level show that fictionized cartoons constituted the typical material read by urban students, whereas listed and similar titles constituted that read by rural students. The superior literary quality of the fiction reported from these rural Negro schools is due primarily to the presence in several of the schools of the collections of books secured through the aid of the Rosenwald Fund.

The most striking comparison of the demonstration area with the other southern counties so far revealed is in the superiority of the type of juvenile fiction read by both whites and Negroes, and particularly by Negroes in the former area over that of the latter.

#### ADULT FICTION

Approximately 14 per cent of the titles reported by fifth- and sixth-grade students, both white and Negro in the demonstration counties, are adult books. About one-third of those are fiction for the former group, and one-fourth for the latter. Adventure, mystery, and light love stories make up a large part of the total fiction, the former type being more popular with boys and the latter with girls.

The types of adult fiction titles read by groups of the level of



Grades VII-IX and above are shown in Table XXVI. The averages per person are highest for high-school students as a group, and low-

TABLE XXVI  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF ADULT FICTION TITLES  
ACCORDING TO TYPE FOR GROUPS ABOVE THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

GROUP	NUMBER OF TITLES	AVERAGE PER PERSON	PERCENTAGE OF EACH TYPE READ BY EACH GROUP				
			Listed	Substantial	Good Modern	Adventure	Light Love
White—Grades VII-IX:							
Male, urban . . . . .	208	0.5	17	.....	8	55	20
Male, rural . . . . .	175	0.8	19	I	9	56	15
Female, urban . . . . .	329	0.7	20	I	15	25	39
Female, rural . . . . .	193	0.8	22	I	9	26	42
White—Grades X and XI:							
Male, urban . . . . .	227	0.8	53	.....	8	35	4
Male, rural . . . . .	257	1.0	44	I	9	37	9
Female, urban . . . . .	295	1.1	37	I	17	19	26
Female, rural . . . . .	442	1.6	39	.....	16	18	27
White—adult:							
Male, urban . . . . .	71	0.2	30	4	36	27	3
Male, rural . . . . .	23	0.3	44	.....	9	30	17
Female, urban . . . . .	173	0.5	27	2	42	15	14
Female, rural . . . . .	156	0.7	22	I	16	20	41
Negro—Grades VII-IX:							
Male, urban . . . . .	69	0.5	45	.....	10	32	13
Male, rural . . . . .	27	0.4	41	4	7	44	4
Female, urban . . . . .	116	0.4	30	.....	22	20	28
Female, rural . . . . .	37	0.3	59	.....	27	11	3
Negro—Grades X and XI:							
Male, urban . . . . .	139	0.9	43	.....	6	41	10
Male, rural . . . . .	28	0.5	42	.....	4	50	4
Female, urban . . . . .	253	1.1	41	.....	16	16	27
Female, rural . . . . .	72	0.9	52	I	15	10	22
Negro—adult:							
Male, urban . . . . .	21	0.3	33	.....	29	24	14
Male, rural . . . . .	24	0.2	71	.....	4	25	.....
Female, urban . . . . .	77	0.4	29	I	14	31	25
Female, rural . . . . .	72	0.3	29	.....	15	25	31

est for adults. For whites at corresponding levels females average more adult fiction than males, and in most of these sex groups rural residents lead. The averages are slightly higher for urban than for rural Negroes.

For whites of the seventh grade and above, the percentage of listed adult fiction titles increases rapidly, averaging about 20 per cent for the junior high school grades and 44 per cent for the high school. In the high school, boys read a larger proportion of listed titles than girls do. In Grades VII-IX more than one-half of the titles reported by boys, both urban and rural, are adventure and mystery stories, while one-fourth of the titles reported by girls of this group are of the same type. At this level light love stories are most popular with girls, averaging approximately 40 per cent of all adult fiction reported. Of the 1,221 adult fiction titles reported by students of the tenth and eleventh grades, listed titles are more popular for both boys and girls, adventure and mystery stories make up more than a third of the titles reported by boys and slightly less than a fifth of those read by girls, while light love stories constitute a fourth of the reading of girls and only about 6 per cent of that of boys.

The pattern of fiction reported by adults shows considerable variations for sex and for residence groups. Good modern fiction is most popular with both urban men and women and averages approximately 40 per cent, while listed and substantial titles make up approximately one-third of the total. The remainder of the titles reported by urban adults consists largely of adventure and mystery stories for men, composing one-fourth of the total, while for the women the remainder is approximately equally divided between mystery and adventure stories and light romances, each composing about 15 per cent of the total. The fiction reported by rural adults consists primarily of listed books and adventure stories for men, with light love stories most popular for women.

The distribution among the different classes of adult fiction of the reading reported by Negroes in the demonstration counties is similar to that shown for whites. Listed titles make up a larger percentage of the total for Negroes than for whites; and adventure, mystery, and light love stories are reported with slightly less frequency.

Comparison of the returns from the demonstration counties with those from other areas, without regard to sex, residence, or school level, is made in Table XXVII. Important variations for various groups are obscured in this table, so that generalizations must be



made with caution. The superiority of the adult fiction reported by Negroes in the demonstration counties over that of the other two southern counties is more apparent in amount than it is in literary quality.

A study which reports the types of the adult fiction titles withdrawn from a suburban public library furnishes a basis for a partial comparison with the data presented in the foregoing pages. The threefold qualitative classification of fiction used for the Hinsdale

TABLE XXVII  
DISTRIBUTION OF ALL ADULT FICTION OF EACH TYPE

GROUP	NUMBER OF TITLES	PERCENTAGE OF EACH TYPE				
		Listed	Substantial	Good Modern	Adventure Mystery	Light Love Stories
White:						
11 demonstration counties.....	2,861	29.3	0.7	14.7	31.7	23.6
2 southern counties.....	388	36.1	0.3	19.2	29.0	15.4
2 California counties....	364	22.0	1.4	20.3	40.1	16.2
Negro:						
11 demonstration counties.....	1,044	39.1	0.5	14.6	26.8	19.0
2 southern counties....	95	36.9	.....	15.8	38.9	8.4

study<sup>4</sup> is standard, good modern, and light modern (including adventure, mystery, and love stories). No standard list was used, so that only a rough basis of comparison is furnished by combining the light modern type of the Carnovsky study with the combined adventure, mystery, and light love group in the present study. The total number of adult fiction titles in the Hinsdale Public Library was 2,700 and the percentage of adventure, mystery, and light love stories was 41.3. Contrasted with these figures are those for the whites in the eleven demonstration counties, which show a total number of 2,861 adult fiction titles, of which 55.3 per cent are in the adventure, mystery, and light-love-story class. If only the

<sup>4</sup> Leon Carnovsky, "Community Studies in Reading. II, Hinsdale, Suburb of Chicago," *Library Quarterly*, V, No. 1 (January, 1935), 1-30.

fiction secured from the library in the demonstration counties is included, the percentage of the types indicated above increases to 62.8.

SOURCES OF BOOKS

The main sources from which persons filling out the reading reports secured the books read are shown in Table XXVIII. The li-

TABLE XXVIII  
NUMBER OF BOOKS READ AND PERCENTAGE SECURED FROM EACH SOURCE BY EACH GROUP

GROUP	NUMBER OF BOOKS	PERCENTAGE OF BOOKS REPORTED BY EACH GROUP*					
		Library	School	Home	Friends	Purchased	Other†
Urban—white:							
Grades V and VI.....	3,034	13	45	26	9	4	3
Grades VII-IX.....	2,686	20	38	21	14	4	3
Grades X and XI.....	1,209	33	31	21	9	3	3
Adults.....	657	34	3	13	17	15	18
Rural—white:							
Grades V and VI.....	1,977	18	35	24	15	5	2
Grades VII-IX.....	1,180	21	45	16	10	5	3
Grades X and XI.....	1,370	21	45	22	7	2	3
Adults.....	342	29	19	20	11	12	9
Urban—Negro:							
Grades V and VI.....	1,774	6	42	23	17	6	6
Grades VII-IX.....	990	11	51	16	10	8	4
Grades X and XI.....	883	14	47	20	14	3	2
Adults.....	325	35	16	15	11	9	14
Rural—Negro:							
Grades V and VI.....	609	11	46	24	8	1	10
Grades VII-IX.....	368	2	56	16	19	4	3
Grades X and XI.....	356	14	47	20	14	3	2
Adults.....	730	15	33	19	7	19	7

\* The figures given are the averages for the sex groups.

† Rental and special libraries and unidentified sources are included. The book truck is included with the library.

brary includes the main public library, community branches not in schools, and the book truck, while the school includes school branches of the public library and school and classroom libraries. In tabulating the information given, an effort was made to keep each of the foregoing types of sources separate. Considerable difficulty



was sometimes experienced in distinguishing, from the information given, between school branches of the public library and school and classroom libraries. The difficulty was increased by the fact that it is a common practice for the public library to deposit books in the school library or in classrooms; while pupils were urged to distinguish carefully as to source, their answers were sometimes vague on this point. It is undoubtedly true that many of the books secured from the school are either the direct property of the public library or a part of a joint school and community service. The primary interest of the study is in the source from which the book was obtained, rather than the ownership of the book.

The public library looms increasingly large as a source of books as students progress through the schools and into maturity. In each residence and color group the percentage of books secured from the library is larger for adults than for any other group. The general trend with regard to the school as a source of books is in the opposite direction. The percentage of books secured from the home is fairly constant through each of the various groups and ranges around one-fifth of the total. This figure is surprisingly high, particularly for rural residents, in view of the small number of books reported in homes in two of the demonstration counties.

Data from the two southern counties not taking part in the demonstration show very little use of the public library by white students below the high-school level for either urban or rural residents. In Grades X and XI approximately one-third of the books reported by urban students and one-tenth of those read by rural students are secured from the public library. In each case the percentage for girls is significantly higher than that for boys. Most of the books secured by students below the tenth grade are from the school, slightly more than one-half coming from this source. Rural high-school students also rely largely on the school for their books. The percentage of books secured from home ranges slightly higher for the corresponding school groups in the two non-demonstration counties, with the urban percentages slightly exceeding those for the rural groups. A summary of the data for urban and rural residents, white and Negro, is given in Table XXIX.

Data from the two California counties are very similar to those

from the demonstration group. The most significant difference is that the elementary grades rely more strongly on the schools and the high schools more strongly on the public libraries. At the junior high school level the urban students make larger use of the school library in the California counties than in the demonstration counties, while the reverse is the general situation at this level in the rural schools.

The returns from Negroes outside of the demonstration area show that neither urban nor rural residents report any significant use of

TABLE XXIX

NUMBER OF BOOKS READ AND PERCENTAGE SECURED FROM EACH SOURCE BY RESIDENTS OF TWO NON-DEMONSTRATION SOUTHERN COUNTIES

GROUP	NUMBER OF BOOKS	PERCENTAGE OF BOOKS REPORTED BY EACH GROUP					
		Library	School	Home	Friends	Purchased	Others
White:							
Urban.....	885	4	53	24	12	2	5
Rural.....	1,097	5	53	25	10	2	5
Negro:							
Urban.....	214	6	1	8	30	30	24
Rural.....	478	1	64	11	11	6	7

books of fiction from the public library. Urban girls report some use, but urban boys practically none. Similarly, the urban schools furnish very little material for recreational reading for Negro students at any level. Books secured from friends, purchased, and those from miscellaneous other sources make up 84 per cent of the total reported by urban Negroes. Approximately one-half to three-fourths of the books reported by rural Negroes at different school levels are secured from the school, while about one-fourth of those read by adults were purchased. The large proportion of titles secured by rural Negroes from the school (64 per cent) is explained in part by the fact that several of the schools have purchased classroom collections through the aid of the Rosenwald Fund. The teachers in three of these rural



Negro schools which were visited are unusually capable. The school program is planned to reach the home and parents of the students enrolled.

#### TYPES OF FICTION FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

The discussion thus far has been concerned with the sources from which books were secured and with different types of books. At this point it is important to inquire into the differences in types of fiction

TABLE XXX

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS SECURED FROM EACH SOURCE  
ACCORDING TO TYPE OF FICTION; WHITE

Type of Fiction	Library	School	Home and Friends	Purchased	Other Sources
Juvenile fiction*	(881)	(1,758)	(1,473)	(231)	(107)
Listed and similar	80.9	76.8	29.2	15.2	30.8
Series	17.7	20.8	39.4	18.6	40.2
Cartoon	1.4	2.4	31.4	66.2	29.0
Adult fiction*	(1,011)	(904)	(720)	(102)	(124)
Listed	20.9	46.4	20.4	15.7	36.3
Substantial	1.1	.....	0.7	2.0	1.6
Good modern	15.2	12.9	12.2	15.7	37.9
Adventure and mystery	32.3	22.0	42.8	43.1	23.4
Light love	30.5	18.7	23.9	23.5	0.8
Total fiction	73.5	56.4	53.8	59.3	44.3
Total non-fiction	26.5	43.6	46.2	40.7	55.7
Total number of books	2,574	4,719	4,079	562	521

secured from the various sources which have been indicated. The data of Tables XXX and XXXI make such an analysis possible, the first table showing data for whites and the second for Negroes.

The majority of the juvenile fiction secured from the library by whites is composed of listed and similar titles, while less than one-fourth are series and practically none are cartoon books. The school furnishes approximately the same type of fiction in similar proportions, although the percentage of listed books is slightly smaller from the school than from the public library and the less desirable types make up a somewhat larger percentage of the total. Of the juvenile

fiction secured from home and friends, 70 per cent is made up of series and the fictionized cartoon books; while of the juvenile fiction purchased, 85 per cent are of this type. Although relatively small numbers of books are secured from other sources, over two-thirds of these are of the series and cartoon books.

Of the adult fiction secured from the library by whites, 37 per cent is in the first three classes—listed, substantial, and good mod-

TABLE XXXI

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS SECURED FROM EACH SOURCE  
ACCORDING TO TYPE OF FICTION; NEGRO

Type of Fiction	Library	School	Home and Friends	Purchased	Other Sources
Juvenile fiction*	(136)	(727)	(410)	(123)	(45)
Listed and similar	75.8	79.2	45.6	25.1	55.6
Series	21.3	16.2	18.3	13.1	13.3
Cartoon	2.9	4.6	36.1	61.8	31.1
Adult fiction*	(207)	(494)	(275)	(35)	(33)
Listed	28.0	49.2	33.4	20.0	24.3
Substantial	.....	.....	1.4	.....	3.0
Good modern	12.1	15.6	14.2	22.9	12.1
Adventure and mystery	21.3	26.9	27.3	40.0	42.4
Light love	38.6	8.3	23.7	17.1	18.2
Total fiction	49.3	46.3	35.3	37.6	22.9
Total non-fiction	50.7	53.7	64.7	62.4	77.1
Total number of books	696	2,638	1,941	420	340

\* Numbers in parentheses represent the number of books.

ern—while a slightly higher proportion (49 per cent) of the adult fiction secured from the school library is of the type indicated. In comparing the library and the school as to types of adult fiction, it should be kept in mind that the function of the school, at least in so far as it applies to the school student, rather definitely limits the type of fiction offered. That is, much of the fiction in the school library is selected for its relation to the curriculum and objectives of the school. Unfortunately, the data of Table XXX do not make it possible to distinguish withdrawals of students from adults. Adventure, mystery, and light love stories make up approximately 63



per cent of the adult fiction withdrawals from the library, 41 per cent from the schools, 66 per cent from home and friends, and 67 per cent of the titles which are purchased.

Of all the books secured from the various sources indicated, the proportion which is fiction is largest for the library (73.5 per cent) and smallest for books secured from miscellaneous other sources (44.3 per cent). The percentage of fiction secured from the library is approximately the same as the average of similar figures reported for the entire year 1934 in chapter iv.

The percentage distribution of books secured from each source according to the type of fiction is shown for Negroes in Table XXXI. The percentages of fiction are considerably smaller for Negroes than for whites. A similar situation was shown in the data of chapter iv on withdrawals of books from the library. The distribution of the types of fiction secured from various sources for Negroes is, in general, similar to that shown for whites in the preceding table.

Two implications from the data of Tables XXX and XXXI seem particularly important. The first is the importance of the school in stimulating the reading of books and in the circulation of books. In most of the demonstration counties fairly close co-operation exists between the public library and the school, so that actually many of the books circulated from the school are the property of the public library. Ownership of the books is relatively unimportant so long as they are well selected and suited to students' needs. Various studies have shown that students compose the largest group of users of the public library, and so it is particularly important not only that the staff of the library have entrée into the school and work in co-operation with school administrators but that some person on the staff of the public library be eminently competent in the field of the curriculum.

The second important implication has to do with the rôle of the library as an influence in the community in developing the appreciation of good literature. In the data just reported, more than 40 per cent of the books were secured from sources other than the library and the school. Of the juvenile fiction secured by whites outside of these two sources, almost three-fourths was composed of the series

and cartoon books, while for Negroes more than one-half was made up of these types. If the reading of young people in the community is to be directed into an appreciation of the best of children's literature, the influence of the library must be extended not only into the school but into the selection of books that are purchased and secured from other sources. This means that librarians must undertake a more active campaign for general stimulation of the appreciation of the best of children's literature.

The librarian of Knox County, Tennessee, has already undertaken a program very largely of this nature. At the invitation of a large number of clubs, the librarian and members of her staff took part in a series of lectures and discussions centered around the selection of children's books. With each group in which this program was undertaken, an excellent collection of children's books was placed on deposit, so that parents not only learned about them but in many cases read the books which were recommended for their children. Although this program was not begun until the winter of 1934-35, it undoubtedly will result in an improvement in the quality of children's books which are bought for many of the homes in that area. The library may not be able to exert such an active influence in directing the reading of adults; but if an effective program is worked out with young people, its effects will no doubt ultimately be observed in the reading of adults.

Inasmuch as the question is frequently raised whether public libraries should circulate adult fiction of slight literary merit, the high proportion of adventure, mystery, and light love story secured from the library deserves the serious consideration of librarians. The validity of the assumption that the reading of such books will lead eventually to appreciation and reading of books of greater literary merit has never been tested. Greater justification for its circulation may possibly be found in two conditions which characterize the region. The percentage of persons in the South under twenty years of age is greater than that of any other region, while the percentage of persons in the South who possess a reading ability as high as that typical of pupils in the seventh grade is less. Plot and story unquestionably heighten interest and, under the circumstances described,



may lead to increased reading and thereby to increased reading ability.<sup>5</sup>

Some of the important findings based on the data on reading in the eleven demonstration counties may be briefly summarized:

1. One-half of the juvenile fiction titles reported appear on the lists used for purposes of evaluation, and an additional 9 per cent are titles of similar literary quality. Most of these books are secured from the library and the school.

2. The series and fictionized cartoon books make up 41 per cent of the total juvenile fiction reported. Less than one-fifth of the juvenile fiction secured from the library and the school is of series type, and practically none is of the cartoon type. Almost two-thirds of the juvenile fiction purchased is of the cartoon and "big little book" variety. Above the elementary-school level, reading of this type of book decreases rapidly in amount.

3. Approximately one-third of the adult fiction reported is listed in the American Library Association *Catalog, Supplement, and Book-list*. Of the unlisted titles, adventure, mystery, and light love stories are reported with much greater frequency than the substantial and good modern fiction.

4. The proportion of fiction secured from the library is the highest of any of the sources tabulated. As indicated by the books reported read, the library furnishes the best collection of children's fiction. The adult fiction reported, however, is more than 60 per cent adventure, mystery, and light love stories.

5. Two of the differences most consistently noted in the type of reading of Negroes and whites are the higher proportions of non-fiction and of children's books reported by the former group. The average number of titles per person is slightly smaller for Negroes, and the school is the principal source.

<sup>5</sup> See statement in chapter I concerning the distribution of library and reading facilities in the South, and W. S. Gray and Bernice Leary, *What Makes a Book Readable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 87.

## CHAPTER VI

### READING OF PERIODICALS

WITH the increased speed and tempo of modern life, the development of specialization, the rise in importance of the short story, and with other social, economic, and cultural changes in recent decades, periodical collections have rapidly increased in importance. This chapter will present data regarding the availability of magazines and newspapers, the types which are most frequently read, and the sources from which they are secured.

*Availability of magazines.*—Information secured in 1934 under the direction of the Clarksdale Public Library through visits to 490 homes of rural whites in Coahoma County showed that in 60 per cent of these homes no magazines were regularly received. A total of 335 magazines was reported, which is an average of less than three-fourths of one magazine for each family. Women's magazines, such as *McCall's*, *Pictorial Review*, *Delineator*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and *Good Housekeeping* are found most frequently in the homes; while inexpensive fiction and non-fiction, such as the *American Magazine* and the *Saturday Evening Post* is the type ranking second in frequency. Weekly news magazines, such as the *Literary Digest* and *Time*, and farm magazines are also reported. Other types of magazines found in less than 5 homes include religious, juvenile, sports and outdoors, fraternal, and travel.

A study made in Walker County reported magazines in 22 per cent of rural homes and 58 per cent of urban homes out of a total of 500 visited.<sup>1</sup> Data gathered from 282 Negro families in Limestone County, Alabama, showed farm magazines in 13 homes and general magazines in 12, 86 per cent of the homes having neither newspapers nor magazines.<sup>2</sup> A study of the reading interests of Negro children in Grades III–VI made in this county and in Webster Parish disclosed,

<sup>1</sup> Willie Fagan Calkins, "The Walker County Library" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Alabama, 1934), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Data compiled by Charles W. Johnson, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, 1933.