

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
STUDIES IN LIBRARY SCIENCE

---

COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE  
IN THE SOUTH

# COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE IN THE SOUTH,

A STUDY OF  
THE ROSENWALD COUNTY LIBRARY  
DEMONSTRATION

By

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AND

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## PREFACE

**M**EETING at Signal Mountain, Tennessee, in 1926, librarians of the southeastern states sketched in bold outline a program for the development of library service for the various publics which were to be found in the South.<sup>1</sup> This program contemplated: (1) the strengthening of state library extension agencies; (2) the extension of library service to rural areas through the development of county libraries; (3) the employment of school library supervisors by state departments of education; (4) the setting-up of new standards for libraries of secondary schools and colleges having membership in the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools; (5) the appointment of library field agents or representatives for the South who would serve as advisers to librarians and foundations interested in library development within the region; and (6) the establishment of additional library schools for the training of librarians in the southern field.

In 1929 the officers of the Julius Rosenwald Fund, long interested in the educational development of the South, decided to undertake the stimulation of library service in the South on a county-wide basis to all residents, urban and rural, white and black, in school and out. At the same time, they decided to attempt to stimulate interest in libraries in states without library extension agencies by providing personnel and other aid essential to the inauguration of general state-wide library advisory service.

In carrying this plan into effect, the Fund selected in 1929 and 1930 eleven counties in seven southern states, and appropriated approximately \$500,000 for the aid of libraries which would provide county-wide service to all the elements of their population. The counties selected and the amounts appropriated for them were: Mecklenburg, \$80,000, and Davidson, \$20,000, in North Carolina; Richland, \$75,000, and Charleston, \$80,000, in South Carolina;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "objectives" and papers in *Proceedings of Southeastern Library Association, Fourth Biennial Conference*, Signal Mountain, Chattanooga, Tennessee, April 22-24, 1926, pp. 55-57.

Knox, \$20,000, Hamilton, \$80,000, and Shelby, \$71,000, in Tennessee; Walker, \$46,666, in Alabama; Coahoma, \$17,500, in Mississippi; Webster Parish, \$40,000, in Louisiana; and Jefferson County, \$12,500, in Texas.

The general financial plan was for the Fund to match local appropriations dollar for dollar the first two years; one dollar for two the second two years; and one dollar for four the fifth and final year. The demonstrations were to run for five years, the money used in matching the funds supplied by the Fund being "new" money or amounts in addition to that included by the counties in their budgets in the year previous to their co-operation with the Fund; and service was to be provided on a county-wide basis to all residents, irrespective of color, place of residence in the county, or educational status.

The five-year period of demonstration ended in 1934 and 1935, though in a number of instances it has been extended on account of conditions arising during the period which made the modification of the original plans desirable. Some of the demonstrations did not start until 1930, and the demonstration in Shelby County did not start until 1931.

In order to determine the value of the experiment, the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago was asked, at the beginning of 1934, to review the activities of the libraries, evaluate their achievements, and offer suggestions which, in the light of the experience gained, might prove of value in plans for future library development in the area. The School assumed responsibility for the study; its representatives visited all of the libraries, consulted with state library extension and educational agencies, county departments of education, public health, and agricultural extension, and many individuals, and then visited similar county libraries in California, New Jersey, and the Middle West, for the sake of comparison. The results of the study are set forth in the accompanying report.

In making the report available to the public, acknowledgment is gratefully made to the many organizations and individuals who have given generously of their time in furnishing information and assistance. Special acknowledgment is made to Dr. E. W. Knight, of the University of North Carolina, Dr. Benson Y. Landis, of the Country Life Association of America, Miss Julia Wright Merrill, of

the Library Extension Board of the American Library Association, and Miss Tommie Dora Barker, regional field agent for the South, of the American Library Association, who helped outline the study; to the officers of the Fund, particularly Dr. S. L. Smith, southern director, who made all their reports bearing upon the experiment available; to the librarians of the various libraries visited and their assistants; to the directors of library extension agencies and officers in various states who, through their experience and suggestions, enlarged the scope of the investigation; and to other local and state departments which were directly or indirectly concerned with library service. Acknowledgment is also made to the staff of the American Library Association *Booklist* for assistance in the handling of data on reading, to Mr. G. F. Purdy, research assistant in the Graduate Library School, for aid in the preparation of maps and graphs, and to Dr. H. W. Odum, director of the University of North Carolina Institute for Research in Social Science, for much of the information supplied concerning the social and economic background of the South.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF TABLES . . . . .	xi
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS . . . . .	xv
 CHAPTER	
I. SOUTHERN BACKGROUND . . . . .	I
Geographic Aspects . . . . .	2
Population . . . . .	4
Wealth and Income . . . . .	8
Educational Facilities . . . . .	12
Libraries and Other Media for the Dissemination of Ideas . . . . .	15
The Eleven Demonstration Libraries . . . . .	23
II. GENERAL ORGANIZATION OF THE LIBRARIES . . . . .	25
Sketches of Individual Libraries: County Libraries . . . . .	29
Sketches of the Libraries: Municipal Libraries Which Give County-Wide Service . . . . .	45
Library Boards . . . . .	49
III. INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION . . . . .	54
Departmental Organization . . . . .	54
Personnel . . . . .	60
Branches . . . . .	66
Registration . . . . .	71
Circulation . . . . .	72
Reference . . . . .	73
Financial Administration . . . . .	75
IV. USE OF THE LIBRARIES . . . . .	81
Library Aims . . . . .	81
Measuring Use . . . . .	82
Types of Service Rendered . . . . .	84
Book Stock . . . . .	85
Percentage of Population Registered . . . . .	90
Circulation . . . . .	91
Classification of Library Users . . . . .	99
Analysis of Book Withdrawals . . . . .	103
Service to Community Groups . . . . .	106

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
V. READING OF BOOKS FROM ALL SOURCES . . . . .	109
The Data on Reading . . . . .	110
Juvenile Fiction . . . . .	114
Adult Fiction . . . . .	117
Sources of Books . . . . .	121
Types of Fiction from Various Sources . . . . .	124
VI. READING OF PERIODICALS . . . . .	129
Types of Magazines . . . . .	130
Sources of Magazines . . . . .	136
Reading of Newspapers . . . . .	138
Summary of Reading in the Demonstration Counties . . . . .	141
VII. CO-OPERATION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THE SCHOOL . . . . .	142
Aims of the Library and the School . . . . .	143
Difficulties in Co-operation . . . . .	145
Special Problems of School Library Service . . . . .	149
Co-operation in the Demonstration Libraries . . . . .	156
Rural School Service in Counties without Public Libraries . . . . .	161
VIII. FINANCING THE LIBRARY . . . . .	165
Income of the Libraries . . . . .	166
Expenditures . . . . .	171
The County as a Unit of Library Service . . . . .	179
IX. REGIONAL AND STATE DEVELOPMENTS . . . . .	185
The South as a Region . . . . .	187
Tennessee State Plan . . . . .	188
Public Libraries in California . . . . .	189
New Jersey Public Library Commission and County Libraries . . . . .	192
Fraser Valley Demonstration Library . . . . .	194
England and Wales . . . . .	196
X. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	200
Conclusions . . . . .	203
Recommendations . . . . .	222
APPENDIX	
A. FORMS OF CONTRACTS USED IN DEMONSTRATION LIBRARIES . . . . .	232
B. EQUIVALENTS FOR HIGH-SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICE SUPPLIED WHOLLY OR IN PART BY THE PUBLIC LIBRARY . . . . .	237
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	240
INDEX . . . . .	245

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. AREA AND POPULATION OF THE DEMONSTRATION COUNTIES . . . . .	23
II. NUMBER OF MEMBERS AND TENURE OF OFFICE FOR LIBRARY BOARDS OF COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES . . . . .	50
III. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERS OF LIBRARY STAFFS; WHITE AND NEGRO . . . . .	62
IV. YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN LIBRARY WORK . . . . .	62
V. ACADEMIC TRAINING OF MEMBERS OF LIBRARY STAFFS . . . . .	63
VI. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF MEMBERS OF LIBRARY STAFFS . . . . .	63
VII. DISTRIBUTION OF LIBRARY SALARIES OF FULL-TIME STAFF MEMBERS . . . . .	65
VIII. NUMBER AND LOCATION OF PRINCIPAL TYPES OF AGENCIES FOR BOOK DISTRIBUTION FOR 1934, BY COUNTIES . . . . .	67
IX. NUMBER OF VOLUMES AT THE CLOSE OF THE FISCAL YEAR 1934, AND NUMBER OF VOLUMES PER CAPITA . . . . .	86
X. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK STOCK FOR SERVING WHITES AND NEGROES . . . . .	88
XI. AVERAGE CIRCULATION PER VOLUME, 1934 . . . . .	89
XII. PERCENTAGE OF LIBRARY REGISTRATION TO TOTAL POPULATION . . . . .	90
XIII. TOTAL LIBRARY CIRCULATION, BY YEARS . . . . .	92
XIV. TOTAL LIBRARY CIRCULATION TO NEGROES, BY YEARS . . . . .	94
XV. CIRCULATION PER CAPITA, 1934 . . . . .	96
XVI. CIRCULATION PER REGISTERED BORROWER, 1934 . . . . .	96
XVII. NUMBER OF PERSONS WITHDRAWING BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY DURING EXPERIMENTAL PERIOD . . . . .	101
XVIII. NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS IN EACH INDUSTRY GROUP WITHDRAWING BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY, BY COLOR AND SEX . . . . .	102
XIX. NUMBER OF PERSONS WITHDRAWING BOOKS, NUMBER OF BOOKS WITHDRAWN, AND PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS; WHITE AND NEGRO . . . . .	103

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
XX. PERCENTAGE OF FICTION WITHDRAWN BY EACH GROUP . . .	104
XXI. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF NON-FICTION WITHDRAWALS OF STUDENTS AND NON-STUDENTS IN NINE COUNTIES COMBINED . . . . .	105
XXII. NUMBER OF READING REPORTS FROM EACH GROUP . . .	111
XXIII. DEFINITION OF TYPES OF BOOKS . . . . .	113
XXIV. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF JUVENILE FICTION TITLES BY EACH TYPE READ BY ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS . . . . .	115
XXV. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ALL JUVENILE FICTION ACCORDING TO TYPE . . . . .	116
XXVI. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE NUMBER OF ADULT FICTION TITLES ACCORDING TO TYPE FOR GROUPS ABOVE THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL . . . . .	118
XXVII. DISTRIBUTION OF ALL ADULT FICTION OF EACH TYPE . . .	120
XXVIII. NUMBER OF BOOKS READ AND PERCENTAGE SECURED FROM EACH SOURCE BY EACH GROUP . . . . .	121
XXIX. NUMBER OF BOOKS READ AND PERCENTAGE SECURED FROM EACH SOURCE BY RESIDENTS OF TWO NON-DEMONSTRATION SOUTHERN COUNTIES . . . . .	123
XXX. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS SECURED FROM EACH SOURCE ACCORDING TO TYPE OF FICTION; WHITE . . . . .	124
XXXI. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS SECURED FROM EACH SOURCE ACCORDING TO TYPE OF FICTION; NEGRO . . . . .	125
XXXII. TYPES OF MAGAZINES SUBSCRIBED FOR IN THE MAIN LIBRARIES . . . . .	132
XXXIII. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MAGAZINES READ BY EACH GROUP; WHITE . . . . .	133
XXXIV. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MAGAZINES REPORTED, SHOWING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SEX, RESIDENCE, AND SCHOOL LEVEL; WHITE . . . . .	134
XXXV. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MAGAZINES READ BY EACH GROUP; NEGRO . . . . .	135
XXXVI. PERCENTAGE OF MAGAZINES SECURED FROM EACH SOURCE BY EACH GROUP . . . . .	137
XXXVII. TYPES OF NEWSPAPERS READ BY WHITES AND NEGROES . .	139

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
XXXVIII. PERCENTAGE OF ALL NEWSPAPERS WHICH WERE SECURED FROM THE SCHOOL AND LIBRARY BY WHITES AND NEGROES . .	139
XXXIX. SUMMARY OF READING: AVERAGE NUMBER OF BOOKS, MAGAZINES, AND NEWSPAPERS REPORTED BY WHITES AND NEGROES .	140
XL. NUMBER OF BOOKS IN HIGH-SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN VARIOUS SUBJECTS AND COURSES . . . . .	152
XLI. NUMBER OF BOOKS IN VARIOUS SUBJECTS WITHDRAWN FROM THE PUBLIC LIBRARY BY WHITE HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS . .	154
XLII. CURRENT INCOME PER CAPITA BY YEARS, AND TOTAL CURRENT INCOME FOR 1934 . . . . .	167
XLIII. TOTAL CURRENT INCOME FOR THE DEMONSTRATION PERIOD, AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL DERIVED FROM EACH INDICATED SOURCE . . . . .	170
XLIV. DISTRIBUTION OF THE EXPENDITURES FOR VARIOUS PURPOSES FOR DAVIDSON AND RICHLAND COUNTIES, 1934 . . . . .	174
XLV. COMPOSITE TABLE OF PERCENTAGE OF EXPENDITURES FOR VARIOUS PURPOSES FOR THE DEMONSTRATION COUNTIES FOR THE PERIOD OF THE DEMONSTRATION . . . . .	175
XLVI. EXPENDITURE PER VOLUME CIRCULATED . . . . .	177
XLVII. EXPENDITURE FOR SALARY AND WAGES PER VOLUME CIRCULATED . . . . .	178
XLVIII. NUMBER OF COUNTIES IN SEVEN DEMONSTRATION STATES, AND PERCENTAGE HAVING LESS THAN 20,000 POPULATION, LESS THAN \$10,000,000 ASSESSED VALUATION, AND LESS THAN \$500 PER CAPITA ASSESSED VALUATION . . . . .	181
XLIX. NUMBER OF BOOKS AND INCOME OF CERTAIN CALIFORNIA PUBLIC LIBRARIES FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1934 . .	190

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE	PAGE
1. MAP SHOWING REGIONAL DIVISIONS OF THE UNITED STATES . . . . .	3
2. PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL WHITE POPULATION WHICH IS NATIVE BORN OF NATIVE PARENTS . . . . .	5
3. PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION WHICH IS URBAN . . . . .	6
4. PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION WHICH IS UNDER TWENTY YEARS OF AGE . . . . .	8
5. AVERAGE PER CAPITA INCOME, 1929-33 . . . . .	9
6. INDEX OF RELATIVE WEALTH . . . . .	10
7. PERCENTAGE OF FARMS WHICH ARE OPERATED BY TENANTS AND CROPPERS . . . . .	11
8. INDEX OF PUBLIC EDUCATION, 1932 . . . . .	14
9. ANNUAL EXPENDITURES FOR SCHOOLS, 1930 . . . . .	16
10. INDEX OF LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT, 1929 . . . . .	17
11. COMBINED CIRCULATION PER THOUSAND POPULATION OF FORTY-SEVEN NATIONAL MAGAZINES . . . . .	19
12. INDEX OF COMMUNICATION . . . . .	21
13. ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE WALKER COUNTY LIBRARY . . . . .	56
14. ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE CHARLESTON FREE LIBRARY . . . . .	58
15. ORGANIZATION CHART OF LAWSON MCGHEE AND KNOX COUNTY LIBRARIES . . . . .	59
16. ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY . . . . .	60
17. LOCATION OF VARIOUS TYPES OF AGENCIES FOR BOOK DISTRIBUTION IN CHARLESTON COUNTY . . . . .	69
18. PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL LIBRARY CIRCULATION FOR 1934 AND TOTAL POPULATION FOR 1930, BY RESIDENCE AND COLOR . . . . .	95
19. TOTAL CIRCULATION OF BOOKS TO WHITE PEOPLE, JUVENILE AND ADULTS, BY MONTHS, FOR 1933, WEBSTER PARISH LIBRARY . . . . .	98
20. CHART OF TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENSES . . . . .	173

### PLATES

LIBRARY OF THE AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL (NEGRO), KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE	157
SUB-BRANCH LIBRARY BUILDING, JEFFERSON COUNTY, ERECTED BY A LOCAL LIONS CLUB . . . . .	168