Books In Reach Of Every Georgian

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Reading Time 5 Minutes

PLEASE, MA'AM, I would like to check out these three books,” said a tiny young girl to the County Librarian in one of Georgia's smallest counties.

The librarian looked twice at the books and twice at her youthful borrower. Yes, she was right, all three books were the same. They were the three new copies of *The True Story of Fala*, by Suckley and Dalgliesh. The librarian had intended one of them for the Headquarters Library and two for the rural deposits scattered all over the county, so she tactfully said, “You don't want to take out these three books. They are exactly alike. Why don't you take this book about penguins and one copy of the book about President Roosevelt's dog?”

“Oh, no,” was the little girl’s rejoinder. “You see it is like this. Every book that I take home mama wants to read it and papa wants to read it. If I take three copies of the same book, I can read mine in peace.”

Needless to say, the understanding librarian sent the child happily on her way home with three identical books. She herself was content, likewise, because she had the full assurance that all three books would be read and returned soon by a Georgia family which had formerly been denied ready access to good books.

PEOPLE ARE READING

The above incident took place this past fall in one of the 111 Georgia counties that qualified for state aid to rural public library service made available in the state for the first time during 1944-45. Similar stories are frequently brought to our attention these days, and all of them indicate that people in rural communities will read and are reading when books are placed within their reach.

Over a period of years, library leaders, through their state organization, through cooperation with the Federal Government's W. P. A. program, the Library Extension Service (formerly the State Library Commission), and the Textbook and Library Division of the State Department of Education, have been working for the development and improvement of library service to the people of Georgia. In addition to these professional leaders, a strong group of library-minded citizens from every section of the state has also been consistently and untiringly working with each other and with educators, librarians, and officials of the state, and officials in counties, cities, and towns to secure funds with which to establish a library service that will place “books in reach of every Georgian.”

CITIZENS COMMITTEE

This latter goal is the slogan which was adopted by the Georgia Citizens Library Committee at a meeting in Atlanta last December. This committee, which includes some of the state's most forward-looking men and women, is primarily interested in encouraging the people of Georgia to evaluate the library service available to them and to work for its improvement. These citizens are asking that $200,000 be placed in the 1946-47 budget of the State Board of Education for rural library development.

State aid for rural public library service in Georgia was not made available until 1944-45. At that time $100,000 was approved for this purpose by Governor Arnall. This fund was set up in the budget of the State Board of Education in 1944-45 and again in 1945-46, and has been administered through the Textbook and Library Division of the State Department of Education.

Out of this fund county allotments for the purchase of materials were established on the basis of the number of teachers in each county. These amounts ranged from $49.50 to $2,000.00. An additional $2,000.00 was offered to any two or more counties that were willing to unite in a Regional Library Service administered by a Regional Library Board and directed by a trained Regional Librarian. 19 counties qualified for these funds, forming 8 Regional Libraries. 92 other coun-
library service on a county-wide basis last year. 87 counties have again qualified for state aid funds for 1945-46, and it is anticipated that at least 120 counties will meet the requirements before June 30, 1946.

QUALIFICATIONS SET

Counties are eligible to receive their quota of the public library funds for the purchase of materials, if:

1. The library is administered, or will be administered, by a legally constituted County Library Board, by a legally constituted Municipal Library Board serving the county by a contract, or by the County Board of Education.

   The Library Board is functioning actively through regular meetings throughout the year.

   A representative of the Textbook and Library Division of the State Department of Education is invited to attend at least one such meeting.

2. The library now serves, or will carry out plans for serving, the total county population or any part thereof, or a large group of people to use the library when they happen to be in town.

3. The program provides for continuous evaluation and improvement of library service through cooperative planning by all the library agencies, school and public, in the county.

4. The person in charge of the library is certificated by the State librarians, or is under the direction of a certificated librarian.

   As this program grows, more and more books are being carried out into the rural areas where the people live. They are distributed in various ways and by a variety of people. They go to schools, homes, and communities through the use of bookmobiles, school buses, private cars, and parcel post. Visiting teachers, classroom teachers, instructional supervisors, area supervisors, county librarians, school superintendents and principals, home demonstration agents, county agents, county nurses, school children, and patrons take books out into the rural communities. Deposits of books are kept in schools, school libraries, stores, churches, homes, hospitals, filling stations, anywhere that is agreed upon by the community as easily accessible to the majority of the people.

BOOKMOBILES

23 Bookmobiles regularly ply the roads of the sections that they serve. In several counties these bookmobiles make house to house visits, circulating books directly to individuals in their homes both winter and summer. This service is in addition to the regular visits to schools and other places where deposits are kept.

Book deposits vary in size from 50 to several hundred titles, and are exchanged on the average of once a month, depending on the size of the book collection and the development of the program in the various counties. The school deposit may be a loan of the central school library, or a classroom loan of 50 or more titles selected by the teacher, the children, and the librarian. The collection may include books chosen to meet special curriculum demands and books of general or recreational interest to meet the needs of the age group involved. In some cases, titles from these fluid book collections supplement what is already in the school and community. In other cases, they are the only available library materials. The deposit may also include a book or so for the teacher's own professional or recreational reading and books that will help when a pupil says, "and mama said for you to pick her out a book."

SERVICE FOR ALL

Experience is proving in Georgia that cooperation means better library service for all, that books can be exchanged between school and school, community and community, and between schools and communities with benefit to all. The same bookmobile is successfully serving schools and communities, not only in a single county but in two or more counties in the Regional Library Programs. Schools and communities are realizing that they get more for their money when effort and resources are pooled and books and services are shared with others in the county or region. Through continued cooperation at the state, regional, county, and local levels, Georgia can eventually put "books in reach of every Georgian."