

REVIEWS

Library conference held under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the General Education Board, March 14-15, 1941. Atlanta: Atlanta University, 1941. Pp. 91.

The organization of the new School of Library Service at Atlanta University, announced to open in September, 1941, was the occasion and furnished the background for this conference, the proceedings of which are presented in the above publication. The general theme of the conference was concerned with the library needs of the community and the equipment and service of the librarian with particular reference to the South and the Negro.

Members of the conference "included representatives of the two foundations sponsoring the conference, the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the General Education Board, state agents for Negro schools, state school library supervisors in the Southern States, presidents and librarians of 28 colleges for Negroes which in 1940 received grants from the Carnegie Corporation for the purchase of books, and a selected group of authorities in the field of library service and training, including representatives of the American Library Association and of several of the foremost library schools in America." The conference "Who's who," as printed in the proceedings, lists 114 official registrants.

The contents of the conference proceedings consist of seven formal papers, a panel discussion, three informal statements, and a summary. Of the seven papers, two discuss the curriculum of the library school, three deal with library conditions in the South past and present with special reference to service to Negroes, and two project the ideal of two types of service, one to be achieved through the agency of the state and the other through the local library.

The two papers dealing with the curriculum of the library school are by Anita M. Hostetter and Tommie Dora Barker. The questions for a new library school posed by Miss Hostetter are who should become librarians, what instruction they should receive, and how their professional preparation can be made a continuous process. Points emphasized by Miss Hostetter are the need by the prospective librarian of a broad general education, intellectual curiosity, devotion to scholarship, sense of social responsibility, a scientific attitude in solution of problems, an understanding of people, and a sincere interest in using his knowledge of books to meet the needs of people. As to instruction, there must be a nice balance between ideal library service and service as it is more frequently found in the libraries to which the graduate

will go; the first concern is not to instruct in established practices but to develop in the student the ability "to adapt accepted methods and to devise procedures and organization in relation to changing social and educational needs of a library community." In respect to the continuing education of the librarian, graduate library schools provide the means for some; for others short courses, institutes, conferences, discussion groups, and reading programs offer possibilities. In any case, the implication is clear that a library school has an obligation to provide a total program of professional education.

The education of librarians for library service in the South is presented by Miss Barker from three angles: types of positions to be filled; preprofessional preparation and selection of students; and the nature and content of the professional curriculum. Important points made are that the young graduate librarian is interested first of all in a job and frequently takes a position that is not in his first field of interest, which suggests that the curriculum should not be too narrowly specialized; that most of the positions are one-man jobs, which means there must be a nice balance between theory and practice; that the desirable academic prepreparation includes those subjects usually comprehended in a liberal arts program, which means that the prospective librarian should be steered away from a program too heavily weighted with vocational courses, especially those semiprofessional courses in library science intended for the teacher-librarian; that the need and the opportunity demand that recruits to the profession be of better than average ability as evidenced by a rank in academic achievement in the upper half of the class; and that, in developing the curriculum, emphasis should be put on the orientation of the library to its environment, but the work must be co-ordinated with that of other library schools if the student is to be eligible for entrance for advanced study.

The three papers that deal with present library conditions, past achievements, and future objectives are those by Dean Louis R. Wilson, Dr. Eliza Atkins Gleason, and Florence Curtis. Dean Wilson lists three purposes of his paper: to indicate the extent to which the status of library service in the South has been documented; to consider recent developments of significance in library service in the South for whites and Negroes; and to point out certain ways in which the members of this conference may assist this new school to advance library service in the region and nation. Under the first head are listed some dozen studies published in the last fifteen years that have dealt with the theme, which leads Dean Wilson to the conclusion that "in this body of material the status of library service in this region is more extensively documented than that of any other of the major regions of the nation, and, judged by national standards, it is shown to be less satisfactorily developed than in any other major division of the nation." Under recent developments of significance are listed: the growth in effectiveness of state library agencies; the state-wide library programs through the W.P.A.; the advance of the school

library program through the adoption of standards, the certification of school librarians, the work of school library supervisors, and state aid; the advance in the college and university library field in respect to new library buildings, co-operative agreements, union catalogs, description of resources, and surveys of selected libraries; and the new type and new patterns of library service developed through the T.V.A. Developments in Negro library service in these same fields are traced with less satisfactory results owing to the fact that library service for Negroes is far less well developed than that for whites and is largely undocumented. However, progress can be recorded in the public library field: in school libraries, through the application of standards of accreditation, state aid, and supervision; in Negro college and university libraries, through accreditation by the Southern Association, new library buildings, increased book collections, and aid from foundations; in the development of opportunity in several of the higher institutions of learning for graduate study and research; and in the establishment in the South of agencies for the training of Negro librarians which have furnished and are furnishing a body of trained workers in the school, college, university, and public libraries "whose influence and leadership should insure an advance of untold significance and promise for the future." It is a situation for which Dean Wilson recommends bold and constructive planning, and he indicates three lines of action for the conference: "more accurate reporting of what the relative status of library service to Negroes and whites is in the South"; the formulation of an accurate and informed prescription based on these data and vigorous support of the plans to make it effective; and full co-operation with this new library school in its "effort to develop new formulas of action, to train an increasingly effective personnel, and to lead in a new consideration of all the aspects of library service to Negroes in this and other areas of the nation."

Dr. Gleason's paper is concerned with three aspects of public library service and the Negro: the availability of public library facilities to Negroes in the South; a brief summary of the legal background and structure which form the basis of the present situation; and a suggestion as to the future outlook. The facts presented regarding the extent of public library service for Negroes in the thirteen southern states need no further comment to make evident the conspicuous inequalities between library facilities for whites and for Negroes: the percentage of the white population receiving service is twice as great as the Negro population receiving service; only 5 per cent of southern rural Negroes receive public library service; and, of a total of 774 public library units in the area, only 99 provide service for Negroes, which means that service is denied to approximately two million Negroes who live in areas where public libraries are open to the white population but not to Negroes. These figures refer to quantitative aspects of the service only. The author states that "if the qualitative aspects were considered the picture would be even

more discouraging." But the most important part of Dr. Gleason's paper is her brilliant analysis of the restrictions that have been imposed upon the Negro in the South with respect to his sharing in public services through laws of special application to the Negro, which have been upheld by judicial decisions, and how these have operated in the field of library service. Space does not permit extended development of the argument here, but fortunately the material has been published in a larger work of which it is a part and which, it is to be hoped, will have the circulation and the thoughtful consideration that its importance merits.¹ Applying to libraries the principles growing out of these laws of special application and of the court decisions relating to them, Dr. Gleason establishes two propositions:

First, the Negro has a right in the first instance to use every state public library service on the same conditions as other races. Second, this right may be defeated by the establishment of separate library service for the Negro which is substantially equal to that provided for others. . . . This raises the difficult question of what separate library service would be substantially equal.

The same propositions and the same question apply to the Negro's rights at the point of local library control. The author points out that, "at present, no precise definition of substantial equality has been given by the Supreme Court or by the highest courts of the Southern states" and that, "in order to challenge the substantial equality of the Negro library, it will be necessary in a proper case to marshal the facts and point by point, covering books, building, staff, and all other pertinent matters, to measure the Negro library against the white library." She concludes, however, that "this is from the point of view of legal theory; from the point of view of practical possibilities there probably is not now and never will be enough library funds to build in every southern community a first-class library for white people and then to build another substantially equal separate library for Negroes." What, then, of the future? Without attempting to go into detail as to methods, Dr. Gleason suggests a pragmatic approach: "Capable and consecrated library leadership, just as capable and consecrated leadership in other fields, can always find specific methods of approach for the problems which the time, place, and circumstances may present." The fact that Dr. Gleason is the director of the new library school gives confidence that the appropriate leadership will be supplied.

Discouraging as are the present limitations, hope for overcoming them is found in the inspiring story of accomplishments since 1925 (the date of the establishment of the Hampton Institute Library School), as told by Miss Curtis, "when the history of Negro education is written," writes Miss Curtis, "I think that the chapter on this period of fifteen years will be called: The

¹ Eliza Atkins Gleason, *The southern Negro and the public library: a study of the government and administration of public library service to Negroes in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941).

Influence of the Library in Education." Fifteen years ago there was but one Negro graduate of a library school, and he was not interested in a position in the South. Today, Miss Curtis points out, a college campus without a modern library building is almost an exception.

As I see the libraries growing in size and in use, the faculties enjoying not only the books but the current magazines in their special fields, keeping up with the progress of thought, going in and out of the bookstacks and the reference rooms; as I see the children coming into the school libraries; as I see the students in the browsing rooms and browsing corners, reading books never before available in home or school, I know that this is really another age, for when this work began these opportunities were almost unknown.

Miss Curtis pays tribute to all the individuals and agencies that have made possible the present advance, but it is to the young Negro librarians who have gone into these situations to whom she pays special tribute for having done the work.

They have gone back to the South and have given a service that cannot be measured; they have started every type of library service and have worked long hours and sat up nights to do it; it is they that have won respect for the title of librarian and have laid the sure foundation upon which this new library school must build.

Any reader of Miss Curtis' paper will recognize that tribute should also be paid to her, for it is evident that her visits through the years and her wise counsel and encouragement were important factors in making possible this story of high achievement.

Objectives in library service on the state and the local level are discussed in two papers: "The service of the state," by Ruth Theobald Young, and "The local library as a community intelligence center," by Ernestine Rose. Mrs. Young outlines the essential elements in a state program for library extension, indicating the areas of the state's responsibility and the unofficial agencies that contribute to the development of the program.

The library as an intelligence center, as described by Miss Rose, is a stimulating portrayal of library service as a dynamic force in community life connoting, first, collecting the necessary materials; second, making them available to everybody; third, offering specialized service to individuals with opportunity for conference and exchange of opinion; and, fourth, furthering co-operative efforts between this intelligence center and all the other active organizations in the community. To meet this ideal are needed a better-trained, more scholarly, and cultivated personnel; wider use of tools other than books, such as manuscripts, pamphlets, records, etc.; and a different type of library building which gives the reader immediate access to the help he wants. With reference to finances, Miss Rose uses a Chinese story and a proverb to point her moral. The story suggests a connection between faith and the removal of mountains, and the proverb says: "It is better to light a candle than to curse the dark."

The problems which the librarian faces with special reference to the work

of the Negro college and high school is the subject of a panel discussion led by Fred McCuistion and participated in by six librarians. Some of the problems indicated are: the need to create an understanding on the part of school administrators and principals of the function of the library in the modern school; to recruit a higher type of personnel for libraries on the lower educational levels; to develop reading tastes and establish good reading habits while children are in school so as to inspire them to use books as tools throughout life; to keep the librarians in small schools informed of help available from state agencies; and to overcome the complete lack of reading background of most high-school students.

The felicitous remarks of Dr. Keppel on the conference as an enterprise that would have interested the founder of the Carnegie Corporation as being close to two things to which Mr. Carnegie was most completely devoted—the extension and broadening of opportunity and the library; the comments of Dr. Bishop on the education of librarians and the program of aid of the Carnegie Corporation to Negro college libraries; the succinct summary of the conference by Carl H. Milam; and the gracious words of President Clement in closing the conference complete the record of the proceedings.

The importance and significance of this conference are far greater than the relatively brief ninety-one pages of its proceedings might suggest. This report of the proceedings, however, is an important addition to that list of publications dealing with the documentation of library service in the South. Dean Wilson refers to the conference as an occasion “which may well be marked as historic, since there is high expectation that a new and significant contribution to education and cultural development in the South will be made by this new addition to the educational resources of Atlanta University.” The proceedings hold the promise that this expectation will be realized. It may well be that it marks a new beginning in the development of library service to Negroes in the South, or possibly one should say the beginning of the second chapter of the history of library service to Negroes, the first chapter of which has been written in the last fifteen years. The papers all show a willingness to face the facts and a recognition of the handicaps to be overcome. On the other hand, they show a clear perception of the immediate needs and the long-time objectives and, at the same time, give assurance of the existence of the faith and the confidence necessary for their achievement.

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