

CHAPTER VI
INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND
ADMINISTRATION¹

THE internal organization and administration of a public library are significant determining factors in the type of service which the institution is able to render. Especially is this true when only extremely limited funds are available for operation. Under this circumstance the only factors likely to alleviate the condition would be those arising from superior internal organization. With all policies being set and all finances being administered by the main library and yet with as separate a working organization as is usually found under the branch system, it is difficult to maintain an internal structure which is capable of rendering effective service. The excessive restraint which the branch librarian is usually compelled to exercise at all times in all manner of activities is the greatest handicap toward the successful and progressive administration of this form of public library service for the Negro in the South. Whether we shall attribute the evil to the branch system or to other causes, this fact remains that, until the Negro branch librarian is allowed a larger share in the planning and administration of the branch's activities, "adequate" service can scarcely be hoped for.

It immediately follows that the problem of personnel must be considered carefully.

¹ In this chapter, when authority is not otherwise cited, information was obtained from questionnaires or personal visits to libraries.

This is particularly important in the case of the librarian, who is responsible for the general policies of the library and its effective functioning in the community. The rich potentialities of the library will likely not reach their full development except under a person able to assume the responsibility of adapting the program of the library to the needs of the community and of furnishing the leadership which the professional direction of a library staff entails.²

This statement was made in regard to the head librarian of the system; but, as has been pointed out, the Negro branch is not like other branches, and, if the Negro community is to benefit materially from the contributions which the public library can make, the leadership necessary to promote this situation must come from the Negro group, since past experience leads us to believe that, as a general thing, it will not come from head librarians or boards of trustees.

LIBRARY QUARTERS AND HOURS

Negro branch libraries are housed principally in quarters especially provided for the purpose, either built for the branch or rented or in Negro schools. Library stations for Negroes are usually housed in schools, though there are instances when other locations, such as churches, have been utilized. Whether the public library branch located in a school operates as effectively as one housed in other quarters has been a subject of much general discussion. Since library services for Negroes, under the present circumstances, must be operated under sufficient unavoidable handicaps, it is imperative that any factor which might affect the quality of service should be considered very carefully.

School locations.—Twenty-three, or slightly over 30 per cent of the seventy-five libraries and stations, counting

² L. R. Wilson and E. A. Wight, *County Library Service in the South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), pp. 15-16.

only one unit for each station, are housed in schools. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this system? The greatest advantage in school locations is the reduction of total expenditures for operation. The quarters are ordinarily free of rent; personnel, sometimes professionally and always academically trained, is usually available for part-time work; and often the board of education either pays the salary of the librarian or contributes to it and also appropriates funds for books and supplies. For more adequate Negro service, this would seem to offer a partial solution. Let us consider, however, certain other factors. Granting the assumption that a public library is supposed to serve all classes and age groups, can it be safely assumed that an institution located in another institution, which operates primarily for the instruction of the juvenile members of the community, can operate effectively when it attempts to serve adult members of the community? First, is it not probable that a psychological barrier may be immediately set up in the mind of the adult, the result being that he at once feels that the library is for children and that it is not really an institution designed to serve adults. Consequently, to him, it is not his library, and it is very probable that this feeling of "not belonging" will significantly affect his use of the institution. It is granted that, before a final statement could be made upon this point, more systematic and detailed study would have to be made than was possible for this discussion. However, a definite attempt was made to secure the reactions of adults in the community when a city was visited whose Negro branch library was located in a school. On six different occasions, when an adult was asked the location of the Negro branch, a reply of this nature was received: "We don't have a public library for colored people here, but there is one over in the school for the children." This sample of opinion is,

of course, too small to generalize upon, but it may be safely said that in those six cities, the public library branch for Negroes was not satisfactorily reaching its potential public.

On certain occasions it was found that not only was the public unaware of the existence of the public library in the school, but so was the librarian, as her activities had always been interpreted to her as having to do only with the school library. This is understandable when the fact is known that, except in the larger cities, emphasis has customarily been placed on the reading of the child rather than on the use of the library by all age groups. This attitude is not confined to the Negro community but is shared by both racial groups. In so far as the Negro group is concerned, this condition has been fostered to a large extent by the attitudes of the chief librarians who have felt that little could be done for the average adult Negro reader. This, of course, is an assumption for which there is no proof. If sufficient thought and diligence had been applied to the creation of new modes for the dissemination of ideas to groups whose academic experiences have been limited, it is quite probable that a different story could be told. There is one other significant reason for not allowing the emphasis to remain on the child. Children mature, and a future program must be planned for them; they will be lost as library patrons if only children's material continues to appear on the library's shelves.

Other instances of disadvantages of the fusion between school and public library arise from the restrictions placed by boards of education on the use of the buildings after school hours and on week ends. In a few isolated instances public libraries located in schools were compelled to be closed during the evening hours and on Saturdays because the building was not heated during those hours.

Though this discussion has not attempted to offer con-

clusive arguments in regard to school locations for the Negro branch library or station, it is hoped that it has presented sufficient information to provoke thought on the question and to prompt careful consideration of the problem in the event of the establishment of a Negro branch library. The arguments in favor of a separate and well-equipped branch are clearly important.

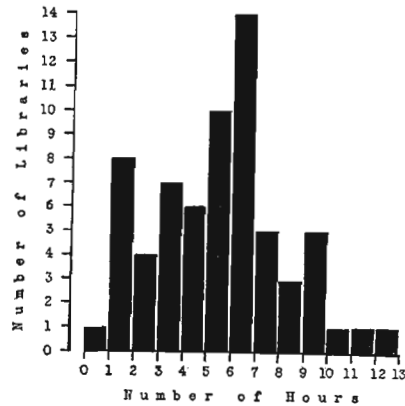


FIG. 7.—Distribution of library hours of sixty-six Negro branch libraries. The median is .5.65.

Hours of opening.—Consistency is as lacking in the number of hours Negro branch libraries are open for service as it is in the amount of money spent for their operation. Figure 7 presents data on this subject. It may be seen that there was one branch library open less than one hour per day and one library open between twelve and thirteen hours per day. Fourteen libraries—the greatest number in any group represented—were open between six and seven hours a day, and the remaining fifty fell into various other groupings. The median for the whole distribution of sixty-six libraries is 5.65, a little more than five and one-half

hours per day. Information on the hours of independent Negro libraries will be presented in a later chapter.

PERSONNEL

The importance of efficient personnel in the administration of public library service has already been emphasized, and especially is this true for a service which is a new experience for a very large majority of any group and to which the group comes voluntarily.

TABLE 20
ACADEMIC TRAINING OF THE PERSONNEL OF
NEGRO BRANCH LIBRARIES

	High School but No Certificate or Less	High School Graduate	College but No Degree	College Degree
Librarians	6	16	32	27
Per Cent.	8	20	40	34

Training.—A rough classification of the academic training of the personnel of Negro branch libraries follows in Table 20. As with all other data for Negro library service, it is also incomplete and gives information for only sixty-five of the seventy branch libraries listed. Certain of the branch units have more than one person on the staff, and that accounts for the difference in number. For a reasonably accurate interpretation of Table 20, certain factors must be kept in mind which do not show in this tabulation. The third column, showing the number who have gone to college but who have received no degree, is not so impressive when it is understood that numerous individuals among the thirty-two mentioned have only a few col-

lege credits, considerably less than one full year's work. The fourth column is less impressive when it is recalled that twenty-three of the branch libraries are located in schools and the academic training of the person is likely to be that of a teacher, since very frequently the salary is either paid entirely by the board of education or supplemented by this body. This librarian usually is not only a public librarian but in addition is also a full-time school librarian. The main branch at Chattanooga, Tennessee,

TABLE 21
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF THE PERSONNEL OF
NEGRO BRANCH LIBRARIES

	None	Twelve Weeks or Less	Thirteen Weeks but Less than Year	One Year or More
Librarians.	35	33	2	10
Per Cent.	44	41	3	13

is a notable exception to this rule. This situation does not diminish the qualifications of the librarians, but it usually diminishes the results the general public may expect.

When Table 21 is considered it may be seen that the influence of the school-public library combination is also felt in regard to professional training. Eleven, or 33.3 per cent of the thirty-three who have twelve weeks or less of professional training, work in libraries located in schools. One, or 50 per cent of the two with thirteen weeks but less than a year of professional training, is employed by a library located in a school; and two, or 20 per cent of the ten with one year or more of professional training, work in public library branches located in schools.

Salaries.—The distribution of the salaries of forty-four branch librarians is given in Figure 8. This figure contains data on all libraries for which information was available regardless of the number of hours the branch was open. The range was from \$96.00 to \$2,010.00, with a median of \$801.33. Nine received from \$100.00 to \$200.00 for the year; eight received from \$900.00 to \$1,000.00, and six received from \$1,000.00 to \$1,100.00. These are the groups into which the greatest number of cases fall; the remainder

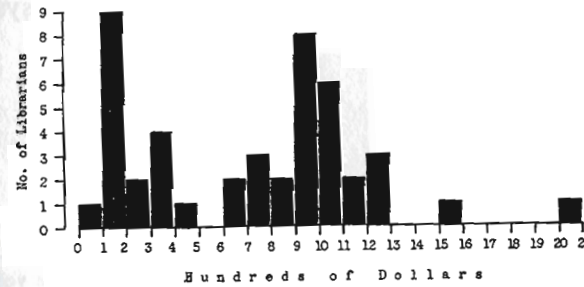


FIG. 8.—Salary distribution of Negro branch librarians for the year 1937 in forty-five libraries in which the hours ranged from one to twelve per day. The median is \$801.33. Range: \$96-\$2,010.

are scattered throughout the whole range. Figure 9 shows the distribution of the salaries paid to Negro branch librarians in twenty-four libraries open on the average of six or more hours per day, six days per week. It may be seen from this distribution that when the libraries which are open only a few hours per day are dropped from the distribution, the average salary is raised and the range is narrower. This would be expected, as those libraries open less than six hours per day would certainly be considered as having part-time librarians. Figure 10 gives the same information for branches open on the average of five or more hours per day, six days per week. The range is narrower than that

in Figure 8 but wider than that in Figure 9, while the average salary is more than that in Figure 8 but less than that in Figure 9. It seems safe to say from this evidence that the greater number of hours a branch is open, the greater the possibility for a higher salary.

Examinations and certification.—Neither examinations for placement nor promotion seem to have gained sufficient headway to affect appreciably the personnel of Negro branch libraries. Eleven libraries reported that some system of examination was in effect, but details of the systems

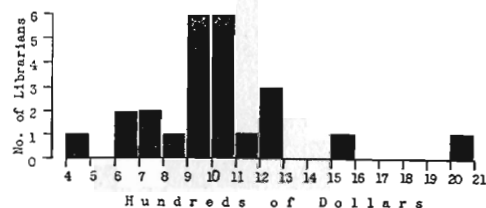


FIG. 9.—Salary distribution of Negro branch librarians for the year 1937 in twenty-four libraries open on the average of six or more hours per day, six days per week. The median is \$999.50. Range: \$480-\$2,010.

were not cited. Personal observation substantiates the belief that whatever is being accomplished in this direction is negligible. State certification, though not new in library development, has not gained widespread popularity in southern states, and consequently it would not be expected to affect to any great extent the personnel of Negro branch libraries.

BOOK SELECTION

Book-selection policies vary greatly among library systems. Two libraries reported that book selection was initiated in the Negro branch and that the branch was allowed a sum of money each month, which the branch librarian knew in advance, to provide for the branch book needs.

In both instances the lists were subject to the approval of the main library, and the financial transactions were carried on entirely through the main office. Seven other libraries reported that the book lists originated at the branch but that no stipulation was made by the main library as to the amount which could be spent periodically. In nineteen libraries the selection was made by the main library with the assistance of the Negro branch librarian, but the degree

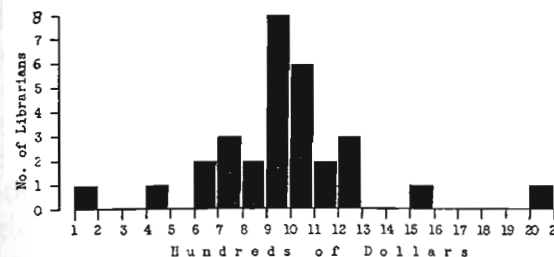


FIG. 10.—Salary distribution of Negro branch librarians for the year 1937 in thirty libraries open on the average of five or more hours per day, six days per week. The median is \$874.50. Range: \$150-\$2,010.

of assistance accepted was not stated. The remaining twenty-five libraries for which information was available reported that all book selection was carried on at the main library with the exception of special requests. Ten of the seventeen branch libraries unaccounted for in regard to the book-selection policy set for them had few problems in this connection, as it was found that the majority of the books going to these ten branches were either gifts or books withdrawn from the main collection.

The process of book selection is one of the most important phases of any librarian's activity. It is through the result of this activity that he attempts to find a medium which will convey the library's usefulness to its public. It is mainly for the successful completion of this duty that the

librarian attempts to know his community well. Whenever this significant phase of his activity is entirely cut off or greatly circumscribed by limited opportunity to exercise ability in this direction, the result in terms of service is likely to be unsatisfactory.

INTERLIBRARY LOANS

Interlibrary loan in this connection refers to the exchange of books between the main library and the Negro

TABLE 22
ACCESSIBILITY OF MAIN LIBRARY COLLECTIONS
TO NEGRO BRANCHES

Unrestricted Accessibility	Upon Special Request	For Reference Only	Not Accessible
23	23	5	8

branch. Ordinarily it would be assumed that all main library books would be accessible to any branch, but this seems not always to be the southern custom. Table 22 shows in tabulated form the loan privileges extended to Negro branches and stations by main libraries. This classification, though essentially correct, does not show in detail what the situation actually is. "Upon Special Request" is a phrase which has been made to cover numerous bases upon which material is available. Whether the request is sufficiently special is, of course, always determined by the main library, which means that the Negro branch's opportunity to borrow is placed, in many instances, on the basis of a privilege rather than as a part of the regular library routine.

COUNTY EXTENSION

County extension from those units giving county service is carried on in twelve systems by the Negro branch, in nine systems by the main library, and in two by the Negro branch and the main library jointly. The methods employed to provide this service vary, but the most common is the deposit station. Other means used are small branches, package libraries, mailed either to individuals or to groups, direct automobile service, direct bookmobile service, and the extension of the borrowing privilege to county residents who come into the Negro branch. Bookmobiles are used by only four libraries, and no one of these is for the exclusive use of the Negro group, but each library makes the bookmobile available at specified times for Negro use. Though county service is theoretically accessible to children and adults, the emphasis is put on juvenile use except in a very small percentage of the libraries. This is largely caused by the absence of a vital adult program, though it is realized that factors incident to economics and population do enter in.

Numerous public libraries as a part of their regular program provide services of a specialized nature for certain groups within the community. These groups may be set apart by profession or by age, but, whatever the classification, the services available are of a specialized character and have been planned to meet the specific needs of the group to be served. In this section certain specialized library services will be discussed.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOL

A comparatively recent study of school library facilities for Negroes in the South revealed that Negro public schools were greatly handicapped by inadequately equipped

school libraries or by having no libraries at all. In many states the only collections reported for numerous schools consisted of a few worn readers and textbooks with no collateral material of any sort, and in no state did school library supervisors feel that the situation was particularly hopeful, though some were able to report definite progress.³ Under such circumstances it is unquestionably the province of the public library to extend its resources to the public school. When the situation is reversed, it is the province of the school library to extend its resources to the adult public, even though it might choose to make limitations on the borrowing privilege. Certain difficulties in co-operation usually arise,⁴ but, in consideration of the larger values which may accrue, public library and public school officials should view them with less annoyance.

Methods of co-operation.—It has been shown that in regard to Negro service co-operation has taken one very definite form in the combination of school and public library facilities. During the course of the discussion of this practice, the question was raised as to whether this form of co-operation was advisable, and it was felt that there was some question as to the feasibility of the arrangement. But there are other forms of co-operation which it is felt would be fitting and practicable. Co-operation might take the form of (1) book deposits and small branch libraries for the exclusive use of the school population, (2) special material in the library collection proper for the use of school children, (3) a special collection of professional literature for the use of teachers, and (4), when none of these methods is possible, the exertion of special effort to serve school chil-

³ E. V. Atkins, "Survey of Public and School Library Facilities for Negroes in the South" (March, 1938), chap. ii. (Typewritten.)

⁴ See Wilson and Wight, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-49.

dren and schoolteachers from the general collection as satisfactorily as is possible with the resources available.

The administration of the collections within the school would have to be worked out on the basis of local conditions, but both parties—the school and the public library—would have to assume a definite responsibility. In many instances this co-operative arrangement will increase burdens which already seem too great, but it is very strongly felt that the final result of having well-selected material in the hands of the growing Negro child is well worth the additional difficulties encountered. This extremely important advantage coupled with the increased availability of professional literature for the Negro schoolteacher are benefits which should not be considered lightly.

Present practices.—Present practices leave much to be desired, though some progress has been made by numerous library systems. Five libraries reported that in addition to their regular public library service, they also maintained small school branches, and fourteen reported deposit stations in schools. This service is exclusive of the school and public library combinations already discussed. Any reliable discussion of special collections and special services which are available to schoolteachers and to school children in Negro branches would involve a process of evaluation which this study has not attempted, but it is recognized that accurate and reliable data on this phase of a branch's activity would have significance.

SPECIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

Attention has been called to the fact that in the majority of the libraries under discussion emphasis has been placed on the reading of the child. It would be expected, therefore, that considerable attention would be given to

special activities to stimulate and encourage the art of reading in this group.

Children's librarians and children's rooms.—One of the usual methods employed to provide special service for children is for the library to concentrate all activities pertaining to children under the supervision and direction of a children's librarian, who is customarily a person whose experience and training fits her for this specialized job. Children's librarians were found in none of the seventy Negro branch libraries. Whatever special service was given to this group came from one of the general staff assistants or from the branch librarian. In most instances this service was performed by the branch librarian as the majority of the Negro branches have only one person on the staff. Separate children's rooms designed for the comfort and inspiration of these young people also are an asset in the development of a vital program for children. Seven branch libraries maintained service for this group in separate children's rooms, but in the other sixty-three the service to children was given in the same room with all other activities. The lack of these two means for enhancing the value of the library program for young folk is not difficult to understand in the light of the present financial situation of Negro branch libraries, but an explanation of the situation does not change the fundamental need.

Special children's activities.—Forty-four libraries reported that they planned special activities for children. Table 23 presents a classification of these activities and gives the number of times each activity was mentioned by the forty-four libraries.

The story hour is the most popular children's activity in the forty-four libraries reporting, with Book Week coming second and vacation reading clubs third. It is pre-

sumed that in the twenty-six remaining branch libraries which reported no special activities for children, nothing of a special nature was being done.

SPECIAL SERVICES FOR ADULTS

Though there is evidence of considerable interest on the part of the libraries reviewed in providing special services for children, comparable interest is not so evident in the

TABLE 23

CLASSIFICATION OF NEGRO BRANCH ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND THE TIMES EACH WAS MENTIONED BY FORTY-FOUR LIBRARIES

Classification of Activities	Times Mentioned
Story hour	39
Vacation reading clubs	19
Book Week	12
Special displays	9
Course in use of library	4
Puppet shows	3
Children's dramatics	2
Christmas tree	1
Parties	1

provision of special services for adults. When the interest is further limited to those activities which have come to be called "adult education," the result is less impressive. Many public libraries are justified in feeling that many of their general activities might be classified as adult education, but for the purpose of this investigation the adult education program of the public library has been thought of in terms of those activities which go beyond reference, circulation, and casual and superficial book information. It is assumed that for a program of this nature special preparation would be made, perhaps partly in the form of

additional staff members who would act as consultants for library patrons in regard to their reading problems and also in the organization of library-sponsored group activities. The title, "readers' adviser," frequently designates those members of a library staff whose special duty it is to counsel with library patrons concerning their library problems when those problems do not fall into the realm of questions of general information and the simple withdrawal of books. Adult activities promoted by the library are varied in type and range in complexity from the relatively simple reading club to highly specialized courses in numerous fields of interest. The methods by which these activities are promoted are also varied and range from simple to complex techniques.

Adult education in Negro branch libraries.—A survey of adult education in Negro branch libraries yields almost negative results. No readers' adviser was found in any of the seventy branch units and, of course, in none of the five stations. A classification of group activities reveals the presence of a relatively few library-sponsored organizations, such as reading clubs and garden clubs; but, even in the instances where the library promotes adult organizations, with perhaps one or two exceptions, little thought seems to have gone into the planning of the activities, and little awareness was evidenced as to the significant contribution the public library could make to community life through a vital adult program. However, if a progressive program were adopted, most Negro branch libraries would be ill equipped from the standpoint of library resources, personnel, and standing in the community to handle a project of this sort. In an evaluation by Ira D. A. Reid, professor of sociology at Atlanta University, of an adult education experiment in the Negro branch library of At-

lanta, Georgia, which was sponsored by the American Adult Education Association and financed by the Carnegie Corporation and the Julius Rosenwald Fund, it was found that "the Atlanta experiment was handicapped by its conforming to the standards and program of the Negro branch of the Carnegie Library in Atlanta."⁵ The branch was "most inadequately staffed and equipped" and lacked community support and a working relationship with community agencies, "thus being a hindrance rather than an aid to the local program."⁶ With further reference to the experiment Mr. Reid says:

The library in all probability has the lowest social vitality of all the public institutions of that community. The Negro population does not use it to an extent that warrants its serving as the core of a new extensive program. The vitalizing of an adult education movement, therefore, would mean first vitalizing the library, and unless these two movements can move hand-in-hand, the new one is bound to be either a failure or a mediocrity.⁷

This observation is both an indictment and a challenge; Negro librarians and all others interested in the development of the service must be conscious of the library's potential role in the program for adult education and must constantly seek so to establish the library's position as a vital social agency in the community that any expansion of its adult activities may meet with a fair measure of success. This course is urged, since it is felt that, without considerable duplication of materials and efforts, the public library is best prepared of all other social agencies to maintain an effective program of adult education because of its public character, because of its detachment from sectarianism, and because of the nature of its resources.

⁵ Ira D. A. Reid, *Adult Education among Negroes* (Washington: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936), pp. 28-29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

CONCLUSION

The internal organization and administration of a public library are always factors which influence the type of service an institution is able to render, but especially is this true when only limited funds are available for operation. Since this is the situation in regard to Negro service in the South, special concern should be given to internal organization and administration so that the problems arising from inadequate financial support may be somewhat offset.

Negro branch libraries are usually housed in quarters specially provided for this purpose or in school buildings. Whether the public library branch for Negroes housed in the public school can give effective service to adults is open to question, and both sides of the issue should be studied carefully in the event of the establishment of a Negro branch library.

Qualified personnel must be in charge of Negro branch libraries if the library is to make its fullest contribution to the community. At present the general level of training is raised by the combination of the school and public library. Though this situation is advantageous for the school library, it is believed that the public library benefits little because of the other handicaps under which it operates.

Since book selection is such an important phase of a librarian's activity, it is felt that the Negro branch librarian should have a larger share in this function.

Interlibrary loan is not always in effect between the main library and the Negro branch. Very often this service is a special privilege rather than a part of the library system's regular routine. This condition deprives the Negro branch of the assurance of one of the main benefits of the branch system.

There should be greater co-operation between the public library and the public school since the library resources of both institutions are so meager. Though numerous difficulties usually arise in effecting this co-operation, the results obtained can be of sufficient significance to counterbalance the resulting problems.

Finally, though the majority of Negro branch libraries are ill equipped to cope satisfactorily with the problems of a progressive adult education program, there is need for a greater sensitivity to the potential contribution which the public library can make in the field of adult education. There is further need that the Negro branch library should strengthen its reputation and standing in the community so that it will be in a position to expand its adult activities competently and forcefully.