

## CHAPTER VIII

## PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE OF NEGRO PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND NEGRO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

FREQUENTLY, when statistics are cited which attempt to define the availability of public library services in certain areas, the criticism is made that an inclusive picture has not been given because the supplementary services offered by other educational agencies were not included. To avoid criticism of this kind and also to determine the importance of the services offered by these other institutions, an attempt has been made in this study to investigate the additional facilities offered by private Negro secondary schools and by Negro colleges and universities. The investigation was limited to these agencies because another study had shown that public school library facilities for Negroes are generally meager throughout the region,<sup>1</sup> therefore, whatever services they might wish to offer would of necessity be negligible. Consequently, in the present study only the practices of private Negro secondary schools were investigated, together with those of all the Negro colleges and universities in the states included in the survey.<sup>2</sup> Of the one hundred and eighty available sources, complete information was secured from one hundred and ten. The following analysis will give the

<sup>1</sup> E. V. Atkins, "Survey of Public and School Library Facilities for Negroes in the South" (March, 1938). (Typewritten.) See pp. 145-46 for fuller comment.

<sup>2</sup> List of institutions taken from the *Negro Year Book, 1937-1938* (Tuskegee Institute, Ala.: Negro Year Book Publishing Co., 1937), pp. 197-209.

essential facts concerning the extent to which service to the general public is available from these sources and something of the nature of the services themselves. For the purpose of clarity, separate discussions will be presented for the private secondary schools and for the colleges and universities.

## EXTENT AND NATURE OF THE SERVICE FROM EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

*Free service of Negro colleges and universities.*—Though any college or university maintains its library resources primarily for the use of its own students and faculties, it has been increasingly felt in recent years that an educational institution, such as a college or a university, should participate more fully in general community activities and should be more generous in offering its own resources for wider community use. This point of view is particularly well taken in regard to those institutions located in towns and areas where there is little beyond the church and the school which might fittingly be called significant social institutions.

Possibly in view of this situation certain Negro colleges and universities have seen fit to extend to their communities the use of their library resources. Table 26 shows the situation in respect to the availability of service from these two sources. Thirteen allowed the inhabitants of their immediate communities full use of their libraries free of charge, thirty-two allowed both local and county residents full use of their libraries free of charge, and twenty offered no service of any kind. Those offering limited service and service on the payment of a fee will be considered later.

In addition to the number of institutions offering service, there is also another factor which is of value in an esti-

mate of the importance of service of this kind in comparison with regularly organized public library facilities. It is not always sufficient merely to provide public library services; it is also imperative that it be made known that facilities are available. Of the fifty-three colleges and universities which offered free service, seventeen, or 32 per

TABLE 26

STATUS OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE IN  
SEVENTY-SIX NEGRO COLLEGES  
AND UNIVERSITIES

Free local service . . . . .	13
Free county service . . . . .	1
Free local and county service . . . . .	31
Free limited service . . . . .	8
Pay service . . . . .	3
No service . . . . .	20
Total . . . . .	76*

\* One institution offers both free and pay service.

cent, advertised through the newspapers, churches, etc., that their library facilities might be used without charge by citizens of the community and county. Thirty-six, or more than two-thirds of the group, made no effort to acquaint persons, other than students and faculty, that library service was available.

Still another point of concern in an evaluation of a service of this kind is the number of persons who used these resources over a given period of time. Thirty-two of the fifty-three institutions offering free service were unable to give accurate figures as to the number of community patrons who had been served during the school year 1937-38—the period which was chosen for study. Nineteen, however, were able to submit complete statistics for this item.

Table 27 gives this information, together with the corresponding Negro populations of the cities in which the institutions are located. In only two of the cases listed may

TABLE 27

NUMBER OF COMMUNITY BORROWERS SERVED BY  
NINETEEN NEGRO COLLEGE AND  
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Number of Borrowers	Negro Population	Publicly Supported Negro Library Facilities
0 . . . . .	3,952	No
4 . . . . .	*	No
10 . . . . .	*	No
12 . . . . .	*	No
14 . . . . .	14,050	Yes
15 . . . . .	2,410	No
25 . . . . .	17,978	Yes
42 . . . . .	*	No
43 . . . . .	7,394†	Yes†
50 . . . . .	48,196	Yes
60 . . . . .	9,868‡	Yes‡
69 . . . . .	*	No
75 . . . . .	*	No
129 . . . . .	32,566	Yes
150 . . . . .	19,698	Yes
150 . . . . .	2,288	No
575 . . . . .	63,337	Yes
600 . . . . .	2,804	No

\* Total populations less than 1,000; therefore, Negro populations not included in U.S. Census.

† City and county contract with institution to give public service.

‡ County contracts with institution for service.

it be said that an appreciable number of community borrowers used the college or university library. The highest figure, 600, is not entirely comparable with the others as it is the combined total for both white and Negro use of the college library, since the college library in this instance

actually serves as the real public library for the community and plans its book selection accordingly. Why the figure 575 in the next highest institution is as high as it is has not been accounted for. It may also be seen that the presence of a regularly organized public library unit for Negroes does not seem to influence the number of community borrowers in the college or university library in either direction.

That the number of borrowers in most cases is relatively small is not a criticism of the institutions offering the service, since it is well understood that most Negro institutions of higher learning are in a financial situation similar to that of the Negro public library, branch or independent. When they provide material for their own peculiar problems, they have reached the limit of their resources. This analysis further strengthens the point, however, that any survey of public library facilities for Negroes which completely ignores the public library service of Negro colleges and universities will not be far in error.

*Service from colleges and universities on payment of a fee.*  
—Another fact of interest was to determine the number of institutions in this group which offered service to inhabitants of the community or county on the payment of a fee. It was found that three offered service under these conditions, as is shown also in Table 26. One institution charged a fee of \$0.02 per volume for three days, one charged \$0.50 a year, and one \$1.00 per year. Two of the three institutions which extended their library facilities on the payment of a fee advertised that the service was open to community and county borrowers; the third did not. One institution kept no record of the number of outside borrowers who used the library under this arrangement, but the other two college libraries operating under

this plan kept these statistics. The numbers reported were 9 and 28, with Negro populations of 24,190 and 2,410, respectively. In these two instances, the numbers were unquestionably small in relation to the respective Negro populations. This again is not a criticism of the institutions offering this service; it only strengthens the point made previously that the supplementary public library service offered by Negro institutions of higher learning is relatively slight and that this type of service is not a satisfactory substitute for publicly supported public library facilities.

*Limited service from colleges and universities.*—Certain institutions felt that their library facilities were too meager or too specialized to permit them to attempt to offer full service privileges to their communities, but they were willing to extend limited service privileges to certain groups of readers or to all readers under certain conditions. One private college stated that it had extended reading privileges to the patrons of the public library as a part of a co-operative plan. Thus persons holding library cards in the independent Negro library in the town were able to secure library service of a more specialized nature than that offered by the public library. This was possible only because of the co-operative arrangement. There may be only a few occasions when town or county residents have need to use the college library, but the information derived on those few occasions might be of great importance. In this instance an acknowledged procedure has been perfected whereby minimum effort and concern has to be expended on the part of the potential borrower who wishes to use the resources of the college library. Two private college libraries served only graduates of the school and former students. For the privilege of withdrawal one of these re-

quired a deposit of \$3.00, which is returned to the borrower if the material is returned within the time limit set and has not been damaged. The other made no charge of any kind. One college stipulated that all material had to be used *in the library* but made no restrictions as to who should use it. Four colleges and one university offered service to special groups of readers only, such as ministers and teachers or

TABLE 28  
STATUS OF PUBLIC LIBRARY ACTIVITY IN  
THIRTY-FIVE NEGRO PRIVATE  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Free local service . . . . .	7
Free county service . . . . .	0
Free local and county service . . . . .	10
Free limited service . . . . .	1
Pay service . . . . .	1
No service . . . . .	16
Total . . . . .	35

others who were known to the institution or were recommended by someone known to the institution.

*Free service of Negro private secondary schools.*—Private secondary schools for Negroes were for many years the bulwark of Negro education, but in more recent years their influence and number have declined because of a combination of factors. Nevertheless, they are still present in sufficient numbers to warrant a survey of their library activities in the field of community service. As with Negro colleges and universities, one of the questions of prime importance is the extent to which their library resources supplement regularly organized public library service. Table 28 shows the status of public library activity in thirty-five Negro private secondary schools out of a possible total of

sixty-eight. Eighteen schools offered free service of some sort to residents of the immediate community and of the county. Only one school imposed any limitation, which was that books and other materials must be used in the library. Ten of these eighteen schools advertised through some means, frequently the church, that free library facilities were available to community residents at the local

TABLE 29  
NUMBER OF COMMUNITY BORROWERS SERVED BY SIX  
NEGRO PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Number of Borrowers	Negro Population	Negro Public Library Service
0 . . . . .	*	No
0 . . . . .	603	No
3 . . . . .	*	No
8 . . . . .	*	No
30 . . . . .	*	No
150 . . . . .	1,314†	Yes†

\* Total population less than 1,000; therefore, Negro population not included in U.S. Census.

† City contracts with the institution to give public library service.

school, but eight made no official announcement of the availability of their library materials to the general public.

Statistics of the number of users of the libraries of these secondary schools were kept by six institutions; twelve did not include this item in their records. Table 29 gives a résumé of the figures which were obtainable. From this table it may again be seen that the number of individuals served is negligible and also that the highest recorded figure occurs in the institution which has a contract with the city to give public library service. It is quite possible that in this particular institution more care has been exercised

to provide a popular collection since some effort is being made to furnish regular public library service.

*Service in Negro private secondary schools on payment of a fee.*—Only one private secondary school reported that a fee was charged to community borrowers for the use of its library resources. The amount of the fee was \$0.50, and fifteen persons used the library during the school year 1937-38. Unfortunately, it is impossible to compare this figure with the total Negro population of the town in which this school is located, as the figure is not given in the United States Census reports because the total population of the town is less than 1,000.

#### POSSIBILITIES OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE TO NEGROES THROUGH INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

*Co-operative arrangements for limited service.*—Co-operative arrangements between the library units of institutions of higher learning and public libraries offer a partial solution to the problem of insufficient financial resources. Public libraries frequently do not receive funds which are ample enough to provide the materials of a more specialized nature for which they may have infrequent calls, but which are yet necessary if the library is to fulfil one of its legitimate functions. On the other hand, numerous public libraries might be supplied with materials which could also supplement the college or university collection; and, if this were never the case, it is still quite conceivable that certain imperceptible and perhaps immeasurable benefits might ensue. Colleges and universities must be concerned with the quality of their students. Since environment plays an important part in shaping the human product, and since we believe that the accessibility of ideas through printed sources is an important part in the environment, it does not

seem illogical to conclude that the college or university would receive certain benefits, though these benefits may not be readily measurable.

Two methods of co-operation between the college or university and the public library may be seen from the following examples. One has already been referred to in relation to "Extent of Service."<sup>3</sup> It will be recalled that a private college and the local independent Negro library had an arrangement whereby cardholders at the public library had reading privileges at the college library. This afforded the prospective community borrowers the opportunity to consult certain specialized materials which would not have been available to them at the public library.

The other example is an instance where the college library received the greatest advantage from the co-operative plan. A municipal college offered at least once a year a course in children's literature, but the college library was entirely inadequate to provide all the necessary reading materials for this course. Its collection for children was exceptionally weak. The local public library, however, maintained a fairly representative children's collection and through a co-operative arrangement the children's collection of the public library was always made available to the college through direct loan. It is true that in this instance both the public library and the college were municipal institutions, which might have a tendency to facilitate satisfactory arrangements, nevertheless, it is believed that a similar plan might be feasible for co-operation between a private institution and a public library or between a state institution and a public library.

*Contract arrangements.*—Contracts for public library service may be in effect between political units and educa-

<sup>3</sup> See p. 169.

tional institutions just as between political units and libraries and between one library and another. Five examples of contractual arrangements between educational institutions and political units occur in the group of institutions under discussion.<sup>4</sup> Three have already been referred to in Tables 19 and 21, but for the other two no figures were available, and consequently they were not included in these tables. Two of these institutions have contracts with both the city and the county stipulating that they give service to the community and county, one has a contract with the city only, and two have contracts with the county only. From the available evidence there seems to be little indication of extensive public library activity as a result of this arrangement, but the examples are of interest because they exemplify a method whereby extension of service to the Negro population may be accomplished if other of the more usual methods are not feasible.

It would not seem inappropriate, therefore, to speculate as to the possibilities of contract arrangements between political units and colleges and universities for Negro library service or between existing libraries and colleges and universities for library service. Though the few examples of public library facilities for Negroes operating under this arrangement have not brought about service of a distinctly superior nature, it is still felt that the method has great possibilities. It must be made clear immediately, however, that the possibilities with which we are concerned here do not include reductions in present costs of operation or re-

<sup>4</sup> Information from questionnaires: Georgia Manual and Agricultural College, Albany, Ga.—contract with city and county; Sam Houston Training School, Huntsville, Tex.—contract with city and county; Laing Junior High School, Mount Pleasant, S.C.—contract with county; Tillotson College, Austin, Tex.—contract with county; Ingleside-Fee Memorial Institute, Burkeville, Va.—contract with city.

ductions in the customarily proposed appropriations in the event of the establishment of a new service. The resources in every instance, judging by present conditions, would be entirely too limited to permit consideration of any plan by which they might be reduced further; the question of concern here is a means by which library service of a better quality may be produced from the distinctly limited resources at present available or which are likely to be available for a period of many years.

Library experience has proved conclusively that numerous small, independent units, which are inevitably inadequately financed, cannot provide satisfactory library service. One solution would be larger units. In this category would be included county libraries, though administration would be lodged in one unit. Regional libraries would also fall in this class as they would enlarge the geographical area and increase financial resources but would also be administered as one unit. In addition to larger units of this type, however, one might also consider any other arrangement which would broaden the area of operation, decrease the multiple units of administration to a single unit, and provide a larger revenue for the remaining unit. In the category of larger units could be placed, then, the library unit which would result from the contract arrangement of a political unit or library unit with an institution of higher education, the contract being effectuated for the purpose of providing public library service to Negro citizens.

Though the contract arrangement has been discussed first from the standpoint of one of its smaller possibilities as a larger unit, it might also be well adapted to forming a larger unit in the geographical sense, either as a county library or as a regional library. In the latter case, if necessary, the library could serve as a depository as well as an

active service unit. Since the observation has been made that "experimentation in the development of public libraries serving large areas is more easily undertaken in regions where there is little or no library service than in those which are already more or less completely served,"<sup>5</sup> it would certainly follow that the field of public library service for the Negro in the South would be fertile ground in which to sow the seeds of regionalism.

*Complete service solely from college or university resources.*

—When college or university libraries can make special provision for community borrowers in terms of collection, personnel, and reading-room facilities, it does not seem impractical to have complete public library service emanate from these sources. In fact, it is entirely possible that under certain conditions it might be advisable to establish service on this basis. When a college or university library collection includes much material of a general nature and it is relatively certain that the local political authorities are not contemplating the establishment of other agencies to provide service, it is possible to consider it as the duty of the college or university to extend its library facilities to the community on more than a limited basis.

The objection might easily be raised that a college or university campus may not be any more appropriate for the location of a public library than would be the public school; however, it is believed that this point of view would be more difficult to substantiate. The college library, with which the public library would be connected, is normally open in the evenings and on Saturdays. Further, it is an institution established for the use of adults and would not present the same psychological barrier that the public-

school-housed library presents; and, if it does, it may be safely said that the situation arises from the limitations of the particular institution and is not inherent in the nature of the case. If, however, this limitation does exist, it could not be advised that the college or university campus would be satisfactory as a public library location unless the institution is willing to attempt to break down this barrier, part of which might be done through the establishment of the public library unit.

Those interested in library service for children will perhaps also raise the objection that it is very probable that children might be neglected under these conditions. This is, of course, a possibility, but it must be recalled that this discussion was opened with the proposition that when college and university libraries can make special provision for community borrowers in terms of *collection, personnel, and reading-room facilities*, then and only then does it seem practical that *complete* public library service should emanate from these sources. There are, however, other bases on which this objection might be attacked. Children, as a group, are less likely to possess the variety of psychological inhibitions which are integral elements of the adult mind; and school activities will frequently propel the child toward the library if his own curiosity has not led him there before. The inference may be drawn, then, that a public library located on a college or university campus would not handicap the child's library activities to any appreciable extent.

*A recently inaugurated experiment.*—On April 15 and 16, 1939, on the Talladega College campus, Talladega, Alabama, there was dedicated a new library. In the dedicatory program the administration of the college pledges itself to community library service through the plan of action expressed in the following terms.

<sup>5</sup> C. B. Joeckel, *The Government of the American Public Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), pp. 329-30.

NO MAN LIVETH UNTO HIMSELF, NOR DOES A COLLEGE. And the finest gift the college can share is its cultural opportunities. Talladega shares these as freely as circumstances permit and invite.

The eastern entrance of Savery Library gives direct access to the Community Reading Room which is open daily to the people of the City of Talladega without racial distinction.

The bookmobile carries the library services out through the rural schools and villages of the County, bringing enriched leisure time opportunities to homes and schools.

The college believes this inclusive outreach is not only an essential part of its own educational program, but also a desirable modern development of the century-old struggle for full and free opportunity for *both* races.

This project is still in the formative stage, and it is impossible to judge what the results will be. However, it has been begun with a spirit which should aid in producing effective results; and, though the experiment itself may ultimately be judged a failure, it will still have provided a real basis upon which to project a more mature theory of service.

#### CONCLUSION

Negro private secondary schools and Negro colleges and universities at the present time make only a minor contribution in the field of public library service. There is, however, a possibility of enlarging the extent of limited service opportunities through co-operative arrangements.

To increase facilities for complete service and to raise the present standards the contract arrangement presents numerous possibilities for the provision of library service. In five instances contracts between Negro colleges and local political units are already in force.

When no public library service at all seems probable for the Negro population of their communities, Negro colleges and universities should seriously consider the complete extension of their own facilities.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

THIS study has sought to assemble in useful form the available factual data regarding library service to Negroes in the thirteen southern states. It has been based on the incomplete statistics accessible in federal, state, and American Library Association publications; these data have been supplemented by statistics collected in the field and by personal inspection of all known localities in the thirteen states which actually provide public library service to the Negro.

Necessarily, then, the study is presented simply as a preliminary exploration of the broad field with which it is concerned. It makes no claim to completeness save in a quantitative sense. In the fields of governmental status, library "coverage," the Negro population served, and administrative organization and management the basic quantities have been established with substantial completeness for the whole area studied. Qualitative evaluation of the actual effectiveness of the service rendered, on the other hand, has necessarily been of a rather impressionistic sort, although it is submitted that inspection "on the ground" does afford vivid and important impressions of the quality of library service actually available to the Negro population.

This concluding chapter will not attempt to summarize the many facts reported in the study; the various chapter summaries have performed this function. Instead, the chapter will deal briefly with two subjects: (1) a recapitu-