

DECATUR PUBLIC LIBRARY

CITY LIBRARIAN'S ANNUAL REPORT - FISCAL 1972/1973

In any overview of the Library and its services during the past year as compared with the recent past, two or three things will be evident to the most casual observer of library statistics: circulation generally shows an improvement; the Extension Division continues to show a circulation decline; service statistics are continuing to grow; the collection is growing. This double growth in collections and in service-to-patron statistics ranks in first importance - equal to circulation of materials - in assessing the degree to which the Library is meeting its community goals. This has become increasingly evident during the past two years in which the Library has been operating out of new central facilities which have stimulated a heavier in-building use of collections and services.

The collections have grown from 216,529 items to 227,367 items exclusive of pamphlets and U. S. Government documents. Circulation for FY 1972/1973 was 480,350 items, an increase of 22,226 over the previous year. Service to patrons has increased from 60,661 to 61,241.

The book budget for the library in FY 1972/1973 amounted to \$130,000. In addition, the Library received an allocation from the Rolling Prairie Library in the amount of \$15,000 with which to purchase permanent loan materials in some depth in the field of business and technology. The budget for materials therefore in this past year came closer than ever before to meeting national standards which call for the annual acquisition of one book for each five persons in the community. Because staff levels in public service personnel were not increased, the burden of book selection of this magnitude

was overwhelming and in fact it was not possible to select wisely enough materials to expend the book fund and still meet in any significant way the staff responsibility to serve patrons seeking to utilize the library's existing resources. This fact, plus the budgetary bind facing the library in fiscal 1973/74, led to the decision to buy only such materials as could be well selected, while still maintaining a minimum level of daily floor service to patrons.

Still, significant acquisitions were made for Central Adult Collections. The Home Reading Department increased its strength in the fields of literature, applied sciences and the arts. Across the board purchases of basic texts in the Sciences and Social Sciences were made. The Reference Department, using in part the funds from the Rolling Prairie Library, made some important acquisitions in business services and in periodicals relating to business and industry. This year the Reference Department also completed its run of the New York Times on microfilm, a heavily used and significant resource of the Library. The government depository collection has grown and increased in usefulness by a net gain after withdrawals of 1,888 items. 3939 pamphlets were received and assigned vertical file subject headings; 2893 pamphlets were withdrawn. The Reference Department solicited and received during the year as gifts 80 local high school and 64 Millikin University yearbooks. These constitute a useful resource in Local History and have been placed in restricted use in the Local History Room. Finally, mention should be made of the addition of microfiche reading capabilities in the Reference Department which have made possible the expansion of scope of materials in the library. Initial microfiche resources were in the field of governmental technical reports.

Cable television (Channel 4) has provided the library with an opportunity to extend library services to the community. Book reviews in an interview format have been aired weekly by the library for a number of months. The program is directed by the Supervisor of Adult Services and is now involving all staff in the Home Reading Department. It should be emphasized here and the credit given for the fact that these programs are one of several that would not be possible if work incidental to preparing for the program were not done gratis by staff members on their own time.

A weekly staff training session has been set up for Adult Services staff. The format makes this a useful supplement to other training given staff in that it involves a group situation which permits a multifaceted interplay of personalities and insights in discussing materials and service techniques.

I am appending a number of graphs prepared by the Supervisor of Adult Services. These exhibit useful information in addition to showing level of services in various areas. I would like in particular to remark the "Peak-and-Valley" characteristics of library service. There is frequently an annual conformation in these characteristics, but in a growth situation, the growth is as likely to change the conformation as it is either to distribute itself equally or to enhance existing extremes.

Of particular interest are those graphs which chart circulation and some other services of the library over a number of years. Since 1967 there has been a 54% increase in Readers' Assistance in the Reference Department; since 1968 there has been a 121% increase in patron assistance in the Home Reading Department and a 116% increase in the Youth Section.

The Children's Room reports a circulation for FY 1972/73 of 100,077 items. This is comparable to a circulation of 100,275 for the previous year. Readers assistance in the Children's Room declined from 15,991 to 13,159. The decline in service statistics is directly attributable to the loss of the Children's Librarian during the year so that the department was without professional guidance for the last three months of the year - months which rank among the highest in library use. In January, the last full month we had professional direction in the Children's Room, circulation and service statistics showed a sizeable increase over the previous year-to-date.

A vigorous recruitment program to find a suitable replacement was initiated prior to termination of Mrs. Anderson. A new Children's Librarian was engaged in April and will begin work in June.

The Extension Division continued during the year to show a decline in circulation. This was somewhat exacerbated by the fact that one of the two bookmobiles was necessarily taken out of service in August of 1972. New mobile units were on order at the time and it was not, for this reason, economical to repair the old unit. The new mobile units were placed in service in January of this year on an alter schedule. Experience with these new units would seem to indicate that had they arrived more quickly, and been put into service, the bookmobile circulation would have shown an increase for the year - indeed an increase of sufficient magnitude to offset the continued decline in Evans Branch circulation.

The Evans Branch is scheduled to close early in fiscal 1973/74 due to budget restrictions and the decline in use of the facility.

The Circulation Department has undergone a considerable staff turnover this year - more than any other department in the Main Library - while contending with continually increasing workload resulting from heavier circulation. The overdues rate remains fairly constant compared to last year, levelling off at just over 400 overdues per 10,000 circulations. This is a welcome statistic and one which I hope shows a flattening trend although it is premature to make any judgement: last year the rate of overdues showed a 20% increase.

The practice of turning over sizeable delinquent accounts to the Credit Bureau for collection is now more than a year old. The Head of the Circulation Department informs me that the Decatur Credit Bureau report for the year listed \$1,363 for collection. \$369 worth of books have been returned to the library under this program. The library has received \$186 as its share of the collections. Especially effective have been the pre-collection letters mailed by the library to delinquent patrons before notifying the Credit Bureau: the Head of the Circulation Department reports these letters have resulted in the return of at least 50 items a month.

Among policies adopted by the Board affecting circulation work in the library have been the requirement for parents or guardians to sign registration forms for Young Adult Patrons under age 16, and a policy to provide a 7-day grace period on fines for overdue materials returned during this period. It has not yet been possible to implement the policy with respect to registration of Young Adults, inasmuch as the City Computer Center has not yet received the new forms from their suppliers.

The Library has received many compliments during the past year on the quality of exhibits. The Staff Artist, in addition to arranging rotating book displays in established areas of the library, also found time to create and build a new display area - the "Corner Book Store" - to design a special Millikin Bank display for Children's Book Week, to stimulate and coordinate community participation in National Library Week, to design a logotype for the Library to use on letterheads, bookmobiles, etc. The Staff Artist has been particularly successful in locating interesting private collections to use in conjunction with his displays.

The Technical Services Division operated for a substantial part of the year without the benefit of professional supervision. Such supervision as it had was given by the City Librarian, generally in response to questions relating to pressing problems. Our new supervisor assumed his duties in October and was immediately confronted with organizational and work-flow problems resulting from the period without supervision, and the professional understaffing which had existed for a long period. He was able to recruit successfully to fill professional vacancies and a new Head Cataloger was engaged to begin work on the first day of the upcoming fiscal year.

In addition to moving immediately to contend with the problems noted above, the Technical Services Supervisor initiated a program to deal with the backlog in books, phonodiscs, etc., which had existed for some time and which was growing.

During the past year, therefore, it was possible for the Order Department to eliminate the backlog of phonorecords in its department and forward

them to the Catalog Department. The book backlog was reshelfed in a single alphabetic sequence to facilitate access to the arrearage. New forms were designed and prepared to expedite communication with suppliers in the handling of claims and returns. A new procedure for handling gifts to the library was implemented which will result in the integration of gift material with other material and hence lead to greater bibliographic control of uncataloged material.

A sampling of cost figures in the Order Department indicates that in general costs of circulating material has not risen appreciably during the year. To a certain extent this is a spurious conclusion since like materials were not compared: during the past year it was possible because of a number of factors to alter buying patterns to include more paper bound books and more reprint editions; but however spurious, the conclusion is sufficiently valid to enable us to plan for the forthcoming year inasmuch as the same buying pattern is anticipated.

The sampling did, however, show a sizeable increase in costs during the year for reference books - an average of \$3.26 per title. As an indication of cost increases for newspapers, it should be noted the library subscriptions for this material increased 24%. Periodical subscriptions increased only 4%. We can anticipate, however, much more sizeable increases than we have experienced hitherto, unless the Congress acts to prevent scheduled increases in postal rates. Postal increases in themselves will have a marked increase on the costs of periodicals and to this will have to be added the 12% inflationary figure that has characterized magazine prices for the past few years.

Since the appointment of Mr. Babicki to head the Technical Services Division, the Catalog Department has reported a sizeable increase in catalog output. There has been a real breakthrough in cataloging of phonodiscs: during the entire fiscal 1971/1972 only 208 phonodiscs were cataloged, whereas in the period December-April of this fiscal, 244 units were processed. Comparing new books cataloged in the period December-April of last year with the same period for this year, the catalog record shows an increase of 1,554 volumes, an excellent and praiseworthy gain of nearly 28%.

The Book Processing and Mendery Unit set a number of record achievements during the year: 38,081 books mended vs. 10,015 in 1971; 985 paperbound books were rebound by library staff in the attractive plastic and paper board format, compared with 547 home bound items in the previous year; 15,725 "packs" of IBM circulation cards were handled vs. 13,091 in 1971/72; and 547 phonodiscs were processed vs. 326 in the previous year. (It may be noted here that preparation of phonodiscs requires about triple the time as processing a book.) 4,388 periodicals were processed for circulation in 1972/73 compared with 3,681 in 1971/72 and the Processing and Mendery Unit prepared 1,426 volumes for the bindery. Among other operations of this Unit may be mentioned replacement of book jackets (10,527) and preparing cloth bags for circulation of phonodiscs and framed prints.

The accompanying charts and tabulations present in succinct form an accounting of divisional output, procedures, and cost analyses for the year.

Finally, I should not like to close this report without noting appreciatively and giving thanks for the support I have received through the year from

the Board and the Staff of the Library. For me such associations have smoothed the rough spots and have enhanced the pleasures of administering the library during the year.