The Public Library

Since this book was first published in 1955 there have been many developments in the public library field, including the Reports of the Roberts Committee and of the 1961 Working Parties, and the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964. In addition, a committee has recently been established to plan the organization of the proposed British Library. The main theme of the book, however, remains unchanged: if the Public Library is to have its fullest effect on the community its purpose must be clearly defined and its priorities determined.

The author, who has had experience in both town and county libraries in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and England, surveys the history of public libraries, with emphasis on the development of stated objectives, in Britain and elsewhere, up to the present time; he also gives an exhaustive account of modern conditions and deals in depth with the current topics of payments to authors and the use of non-book materials by libraries.

Lionel R. McColvin said of the first edition that it was "a substantial, sincere, well-considered contribution to the understanding of our problems and aims".

Other comments: "The work is recommended to all concerned with the library service"—*Library World*

"Provides a clear and mature survey of the public library movement . . . and analyses very frankly its present aims and achievements"—*The Times Educational Supplement*

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THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Its Origins, Purpose, and Significance

by

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County Librarian
West Riding of Yorkshire

SECOND EDITION REVISED AND RESET

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Preface to the Second Edition

When this book first appeared I acknowledged my gratitude to the authors, editors, publishers, and others who had helped me and given me permission to reprint their material. I am glad to do this again and to thank additionally those to whom I am now for the first time indebted.

Permission has been given by the following in respect of extracts from the works noted: Messrs Allen and Unwin, Ltd (Bertrand Russell's *In Praise of Idleness*), the American Library Association (Sydney Ditzion's *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture*, *Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966*, reports in *ALA Bulletin*, September 1967 and January 1969), Messrs Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. (Andrew Carnegie's *The Gospel of Wealth* and A. E. Bostwick's *The American Public Library* (copyright 1910, D. Appleton and Co.)), the Editor, *The Assistant Librarian*, and the author (Alan Glencross's article in vol. 46), Messrs Benn, Ltd (Sir F. G. Kenyon's *Libraries and Museums*), Messrs Blackwood and Sons, Ltd (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 157), Mrs Grace Carlton (Thomas Greenwood's *Public Libraries*), Carnegie Corporation of New York (Carnegie's *The Empire of Business*), the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust (D. H. Stott's *Delinquency and Human Nature*), Clarendon Press (R. G. Collingwood's *An Autobiography*), Columbia University Press (R. D. Leigh's *The Public Library in the United States*), Council of Europe (*Public Libraries and Life-Long Education Colloquy*), the Danish Government (Danish Public Libraries Acts of 1950 and 1964, Regulation 169 of May 13th, 1965), Messrs Duckworth and Co., Ltd (Rumney and Maier's *The Science of Society*), Messrs Alexander Gardner, Ltd (John Mackintosh's *The History of Civilization in Scotland*), Messrs Grafton and Co. (L. S. Jast's *Libraries and Living*, L. R. McColvin's *Libraries and the Public*, and J. Wellard's *Book*

Selection and *The Public Library Comes of Age*), Messrs Harper and Brothers, Musson Book Company, and Phoenix House (Stuart Chase's *The Proper Study of Mankind*), M. Jean Hassenforder (Développement Comparé des Bibliothèques Publiques), Messrs Jarrold and Sons, Ltd (*Education Handbook 2*), the Right Hon. Thomas Johnston (*History of the Working Classes in Scotland*), Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, owners of Dewey copyright (Dewey's works), the Library Association (L. R. McColvin's *The Public Library System of Great Britain, The Library, Library Association Record, Public Libraries, 1918, The Public Library Service, A Survey of Libraries, 1936–37, Annual Conference Proceedings*, and the Royal Charter and Bye-laws of the Association), the Editor, *The Library Journal* (A. S. Tyler's article in vol. 46), the Managing Editor, *Library Quarterly* (L. Martin's article in vol. 7), Messrs Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd (A. E. Dobb's *Education and Social Movements, 1700–1850*), Donald A. MacAlister, Esq. (Sir J. Y. W. MacAlister's speeches), Messrs Macmillan and Co., Ltd (*Macmillan's Magazine*), the City Librarian, Manchester (W. R. Credland's *The Manchester Public Free Libraries*), Messrs Nelson and Sons, Ltd (L. S. Jast's *The Library and the Community*), New Zealand Library Association, Inc., and the Director, New Zealand National Library Service (National Library Service Report, 1950, in *New Zealand Libraries*, vol. 15), The Nineteenth Century and After, Ltd (*The Nineteenth Century*, vol. XX), Northern Ireland Library Advisory Council (Report on School Libraries, 1951), The Observer, Ltd (Ivor Brown's notes in the issue of March 11th, 1951), Messrs Oliver and Boyd, Ltd, and the author (Sir Godfrey Thomson's Foreword to *Training in Reading and Study*), Dr S. R. Ranganathan (*Library Manual*), Messrs Remington Rand, Inc., and the authors (L. J. Bailey's and W. H. Kerr's articles in *Public Libraries*, vol. 19), Messrs Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd (M. L. Jacks's *Total Education*), the Editor, *The Scotsman*, and the author (E. A. Savage's letter in the issue of February 20th, 1950), the City Librarian, Sheffield (*Use of Books and Libraries*), Society of Authors (*Pocket Brief for PLR* and *The Author*), the Controller, H. M. Stationery Office (*Reports* of the Public Libraries Committees of 1849 and 1927, *Third Interim Report of Adult Education Committee*, 1919, *The Structure of Public Library Service*, 1959, *Standards of Public Library Service Report*, 1962, *Public Libraries*

and Museums Act, 1964, *Royal Commission on Local Government in England and Wales Report*, 1969, *National Libraries Committee Report*, 1969, *House of Commons Debates*, Scottish Education Department *Report on Libraries, Museums*, etc. 1951 (Cmnd 8229), and *The School Library*), Dr D. J. Urquhart (*Public Libraries and Industry*), and Professor H. J. de Vleeschauwer (*The Lending Right* in *Mousaion*, 1964).

Extracts from the *Public Library Manifesto*, 1949, A. Maurois' *Public Libraries and their Mission, Statistics on Libraries 1966, Development of Public Libraries in Latin America, Development of Public Libraries in Africa, Public Libraries for Asia, Unesco Bulletin for Libraries. Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* are reproduced with the permission of Unesco.

In the more than forty reviews of the original version I saw, three of the critics were not too happy. One was concerned at the references to drunkenness in the nineteenth century and feared, indeed, that my book might drive many librarians to drink. More to the point was his comment, which echoed the other two critics, that the book, whatever its intention, was an anthology of other writers rather than a fresh book.

At least I had warned readers in my preface and I shall do so again: "There is little original in this book. Extensive use has been made of other people's work, and direct quotation is frequent. This has been done to ensure contemporary and catholic opinions."

My other reason for direct quotation is not that I am too lazy to express my own version of some ideas: it is rather that I am not anxious to join those writers familiar to librarians who transcribe other people's work, paraphrasing it for the proprieties of copyright, and pass it off as their own!

I would repeat too that in this book the facts are stated and the opinions expressed—and the quotations quoted—with the sole aim of encouraging efforts to secure for public librarianship a proper respect from the community.

W. J. M.

Contents

1 *Introduction to the Public Library*

The significance of the public library to its user will generally be demonstrated by the facilities which it offers to him. It will be judged by the extent to which it fulfils what the reader demands of it, by the extent to which it meets, as the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 puts it, "the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children". The complexity of present-day life, however, is such that the behaviour and experience of one individual are not dissociable from those of the community. Thus, significance is not wholly recognizable and cannot be estimated from the experience of one person, but is found in the combined and interrelated impressions made on society as a whole. The impact of the public library's work is not, therefore, immediately revealed, but must be sought from a collation of relevant facts.

The success of any institution inaugurated and operated in the service of the community depends on three main factors: it must have purpose; it must have a sound administration to determine the mode of operation; and, after that mode has been agreed, it must be put into effect by capable and conscientious executives. The existence of many social institutions is due to necessity: they are, indeed, the organizations which convert a savage community into a state of civilization; they create law and order, and offer other amenities which characterize modern society. For this reason the purpose of these institutions is obvious before they are put into operation, and the responsibilities of the administration lie chiefly in the direction of a policy which is already fundamentally determined, only detail now having to be formulated. The services of these bodies are those which have been demanded by all the community as an obvious matter of self-help and -preservation. Examples of such institutions which come readily

to mind are prisons, hospitals for infectious diseases, and, more general in intention, police forces and the welfare services.

The interdependence and integration of society is such that all forces working for the common good make their special contributions, but at the same time have an effect on each other and on the concerted impact on the community. The phenomenal development in communications in recent years, with the population-wide influence of the mass media, has now made any important forces in the community effective throughout the whole range of society. The student unrest in France, in the United States and elsewhere with its consequences, including industrial strife, shows how seemingly unrelated problems may coalesce to produce general chaos.

The total significance of the public library is fundamentally its influence on all the individuals who comprise a community and on the relationships of these people one with another—its influence, of course, being tempered by other social factors and by their reciprocal contributions. The importance of public libraries can be measured by the effect for good they have on society: this depends on the efficiency of their organization and operation in discharging their functions.

In a consideration of public-library service it is in the definition of purpose that difficulties arise. Unlike the examples mentioned earlier, the need for libraries is not immediately obvious. Thus the history of public libraries in Britain is marked throughout by an element of controversy about the primary and secondary functions of the service. Until recently statements of purpose have too often been confused by vagueness and irrelevancy, have been too often a vehicle for the expression of personal views rather than a consideration of national attitude. Assessments of the value of the service have too seldom been unbiased, too seldom free from propagandist tendencies of one kind or another.

With the passing of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 the Secretary of State became responsible for securing the proper discharge by local authorities of their functions as public-library authorities. Only the primary function of supplying materials is statutorily defined. Section 7 of the Act states:

"(1) It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof, and for that purpose to employ such officers,

to provide and maintain such buildings and equipment, and such books and other materials, and to do such other things, as may be requisite:

"Provided that although a library authority shall have power to make facilities for the borrowing of books and other materials available to any persons it shall not by virtue of this subsection be under a duty to make such facilities available to persons other than those whose residence or place of work is within the library area of the authority or who are undergoing full-time education within that area.

"(2) In fulfilling its duty under the preceding subsection, a library authority shall in particular have regard to the desirability—

(*a*) of securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and

(*b*) of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it; and

(*c*) of securing, in relation to any matter concerning the functions both of the library authority as such and any other authority whose functions are exercisable within the library area, that there is full co-operation between the persons engaged in carrying out those functions."

Thus, the uses of the public library and its value to the community remain largely at the whim of the local authorities, many of whom have so little knowledge of its potential that they cannot assess what are the reasonable requirements to be made of its services.

There is just a hint in Section 7 of the association of libraries with places of work and the contribution of libraries to education, but there is no guide to whether industry, education, or simple entertainment is to have priority in provision. There is still no indication whether the public library is to be regarded primarily as an economic catalyst, an educational force, or an amenity

service incorporating some sanguine expectation of improvement for society. The aims are still diffuse: priorities are undefined. Until there is some agreement on what the effect of the public library on society is supposed to be its force will be diminished, its great benefits only partially felt.

This book sets out to collate the facts concerning the origins and development of public libraries in the United Kingdom in an effort to demonstrate a gradual formulation of purpose, accompanied by a parallel increase in the effectiveness of the service where purpose has been defined.

Though the structure and achievement of the British public library are noted in some detail in a later chapter, it may not be out of place to recall some of its salient features and some characteristics of libraries generally, as well as to define the term 'public library' as used in the following chapters. A library is more than a collection of books; if it is a collection of books it must have been made with some definite purpose and not accumulated by some series of accidents. More often a library is a selection of books, the books having been chosen with discernment according to the use to which the library is put. The existence of the books together does not automatically give them the status of a library. Jast wrote that a library is a "collection of books made effective".[1] Thus, a library technique is implied: the books must be organized in such a manner as to convey their contents easily and quickly. An ideal library, then, is a collection, or selection, of books, accompanied by a machinery for their exploitation operated by people trained in the necessary techniques.

In modern times a library must also be taken to include in its resources materials other than books, such as periodicals, illustrations, films, gramophone records and tapes—indeed, the whole range of audio-visual devices of communication. In addition, the library must indicate or provide methods of reaching sources of information which cannot be provided from any of the graphic or other recorded sources.

The library should do more than provide materials: it must organize them effectively so that the readers can use the facilities

[1] Jast, L. S., *The Library and the Community* (1939), p. 14. *Cf.* also Edwards, Edward, *Memoirs of Libraries*, vol. 2 (1859), pp. 570–574. (References to sources of information found in books are not necessarily to the first edition of the books.)

easily and directly without the need for constant resort to the staff for assistance. Further, it should ensure that the public, readers and non-readers, are aware of what is available both in materials and the facilities to exploit them. Finally, it should emphasize that the library is part and parcel of the society it serves;[1] it "should be active and positive in its policy and a dynamic part of community life", as the Unesco Public Library Manifesto describes it.

The Unesco definition of a library is: "An organized collection of published books and periodicals and of other reading and audio-visual materials, and the services of a staff able to provide and interpret such materials as are required to meet the informational, research, educational or recreational needs of its users." Unesco also defines public or popular libraries as: "Those which serve the population of a community or region free of charge or for a nominal fee. They may serve the general public or special categories of the public such as children, members of the armed forces, hospital patients, prisoners, workers, and employees." These definitions were endorsed in the IFLA-ISO *Standardisation of Library Statistics* published in 1968.[2]

'Public library' as used by the present writer means a library established under the Public Libraries Acts in the United Kingdom (and similar legislation elsewhere) and supported in this country by the local rates; it thus includes municipal town libraries, commonly known in the nineteenth century as the 'free libraries', and county libraries; it excludes such public services as the mechanics' institutes and the national libraries.

The first Public Libraries Act in England and Wales was passed in 1850 to enable municipal boroughs to establish and maintain public libraries out of public funds. Even before this three towns—Canterbury, Warrington, and Salford—had provided library services under the Museums Act 1845, Warrington being

[1] *Cf.* Hatt, Frank, in *Library Association Record* (January 1963), pp. 11–16.

[2] Unesco, *Statistics on Libraries—1966* (1967), p. 1. International Federation of Library Associations, International Organization for Standards, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–26. There are occasional references in succeeding chapters to librarianship overseas and, of necessity in a short book, these cannot be comprehensive. A useful guide to the international scene is *A Handbook of Comparative Librarianship*, by S. Simsova and M. Mackee, 1970.

the first to do this free of subscription. It is only since the First World War that county councils have had powers to provide public libraries. These powers were granted to the authorities, but the choice of whether to use them, and to what extent, was left to individual councils. This accounts in part for the disparity among the levels of service throughout the country. Further differences in library provision arise from the various legislative systems of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, the last with its political divisions after 1922.

By the time of the passing of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (for England and Wales) every part of the British Isles had a library service, in name at least, and a small part of the local rates was being devoted to the upkeep of public libraries. Just how low a proportion went on libraries may be judged from the fact that the total net expenditure for England and Wales equalled a rate income of threepence in the pound; the average cost per head of population was 11*s.* 3*d.* The cost per head in England and Wales in 1971 was about £1. Support from the local authorities for the public library in Scotland and Ireland is even less forthcoming.[1]

The 1964 Act withdrew the option from local authorities in England and Wales; the provision of comprehensive and efficient library service became a duty. Hitherto, the local councils had run their libraries much as they pleased with little interest or interference from the central government. Even with their new duties, most councils have altered their attitudes surprisingly little. The public libraries remain among the most democratic of official institutions, for they are closely in touch with the electors; access to the service is free of charge and in progressive libraries is free from bureaucratic formality, so that the public can easily approach the governing body, the local council, its library committee, or its librarian. The people have a direct financial interest in the libraries since the amount of rates they contribute determines roughly the standard of their library's service.

Despite the multiplicity of local libraries (for there were over 460 authorities in the United Kingdom in 1970 operating independent services), a well co-ordinated system of co-operation among them has ensured a nation-wide coverage of a quality as

[1] Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants and Society of County Treasurers, *Public Library Statistics*. Annually.

high as that in any other country in the world. It means virtually that anyone in any part of this country, regardless of distance from a library service-point, has access to the books, not only of his own local service, but of all the public libraries, and to many private resources too. In addition to the supply of books and other printed material for the 'regular' reader and student, most libraries cater for the occasional needs of scientists, technicians, businessmen, and others who may have isolated inquiries for full and up-to-date information on any topic connected with their work or studies.

The libraries tend to an informality impossible and unknown in some other public services. (It might be an interesting study to correlate efficiency and informality in central and local government institutions.) Many services are available from the libraries without any official registration as a reader.

Successive surveys of public services have shown that public libraries enjoy the confidence of the greater part of the population. In 1957 one such national survey of services generally, undertaken by NALGO, proved the libraries to be the most popular of the public services; 83 per cent of the public expressed satisfaction with their facilities, while only 7 per cent recorded any disapproval. Similarly a survey specifically of library attitudes by the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs in London demonstrated public confidence in the public-library services in the capital.[1]

More recently in a research study of community attitudes and other aspects of community life undertaken for the Government Social Survey, Research Services Limited's investigators examined electors' knowledge of local government and their attitudes towards the provision locally of various public services. Summarizing their conclusions, they found: "The services most frequently singled out for praise are refuse collection and disposal, education and schools, libraries and hospitals. All these are mentioned by approximately three in ten of the electors interviewed." In their list of services of which adverse criticism is most often expressed libraries do not appear.[2]

The time has passed when the parent, neighbour, doctor,

[1] *Public Service* (May 1957), p. 147. Groombridge, Brian, *The Londoner and his Library* (1964).

[2] Royal Commission on Local Government in England, *Research Studies 9, Community Attitudes Survey: England* (1969), p. 96.

schoolmaster, or clergyman can be expected to answer all the questions, and solve all the problems which beset the man in the street. But there must be still some focal point to which resort may be made for all kinds of knowledge (by adults especially, since they cannot fall back on the school staff, as does the child with his illusion of their omniscience). The public library can be just such a focal centre, a universally accessible resort for the educational, information, and other cultural needs of the community: it is an essential service when so much is dependent on literacy and on the easy communication of all kinds of knowledge and opinion vital to any community seeking progress economically and culturally.

Nevertheless, despite the apparent confidence of many people in the library's service, it continues to be under-financed by the authorities: consequently and inevitably the widespread ignorance of its advantages remains.

2 *The Origins of the Public-library Movement*

Under the will of Richard (the famous 'Dick') Whittington there was established in London about 1422 a library for free use by the citizens; it lasted for just over a century, until the Duke of Somerset seized it in 1549.

It was in the early seventeenth century that the first efforts to establish 'popular'[1] libraries were more widely made in this country, and it is fitting that these efforts should again have been made as the results of philanthropy; for there has been no characteristic more marked in the library movement than the generosity of wealthy citizens interested in its aims and progress. The first library to have its stock readily and freely accessible to the general public was founded in Coventry in 1601. Claims are made by other towns to earlier public libraries, but the access to these was generally limited in some way. This was followed by libraries in Norwich (1608), which may claim the longest continuous public-library service, Bristol (1615), Langley Marish, near Slough (1623), Leicester (1632), Manchester (founded by Sir Humphrey Chetham in 1653), and at Innerpeffray, near Crieff (1680).

In 1699 an ambitious scheme was proposed by the Rev. James Kirkwood, at one time minister in Minto, Roxburghshire, and later in Astwick, Bedfordshire, in his anonymously issued tract *An Overture for Founding and Maintaining of Bibliothecks in every Paroch throughout this Kingdom* (of Scotland). So farsighted were

[1] 'Popular' is used here to distinguish these public libraries from those provided and maintained by rates under the Public Libraries Acts. Professor Thomas Kelly's *Early Public Libraries* (1966) and Dr Paul Kaufman's *Libraries and their Users* (1969) are recommended to anyone wishing to study the history of the pre-public-library period in detail.

Kirkwood's ideas that mention may be made of some of them. A place was to be found for the library, and the parish minister was to give all his own books to the new library. He was to make at least four copies of an exact alphabetical catalogue, with imprint details of each book; the main copies were to be held, one by the minister as a check-list till he was paid for his own books, one by the church as a check on the keeper of the library, one in the library publicly, and one to be sent to the central library of the system in Edinburgh for the preparation of a priced union catalogue for distribution throughout the country. Ministers were to try, by exchange of books if necessary, to have a copy of every valuable book extant in one or other of the libraries of a presbytery. The rules of the library were to include security precautions, including a one-month reading period. A uniform book arrangement for all the libraries was recommended, with a location label stuck to the spine of each volume.

Kirkwood believed that the establishment of these libraries in every parish "will not only remedy the forementioned Inconveniencies and Difficulties of Students, but it will be several ways Advantageous to the Countrey, For 1. It will be a considerable Manufactory, and will Maintain many People at Work. 2. It will keep all that Money in the Kingdom, which now goes out for buying of Books and Paper. 3. It will encourage young Men to follow their Studies in their own Countrey, and thereby prevent their spending their Fortunes Abroad, and many other considerable Inconveniencies that young Men are exposed unto in strange Countreys. 4. It will allure and provoke Gentlemen to bestow their spare Hours in reading of new Books, which may prove a good Means to restrain them from Gaming and Drinking, by preventing that uneasie and wearisome Idleness of Mind, which is the Parent of these, and many other Enormities. 5. It will in a short time, carry away the whole Trade of Printing from all the rest of Europe."[1]

In 1702 Kirkwood published his *A Copy of a Letter anent a Project for Erecting a Library in every Presbytery, or at least County in the Highlands*. The results of these writings are found in three Acts passed by successive General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland in 1704, 1705, and 1706. These Acts approved the project and led to the establishment by 1708 of seventy-seven such

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

libraries; the Acts also specified the arrangements and rules for the libraries' operation.

At the same time as Kirkwood was pressing his cause in Scotland Dr Thomas Bray was abandoning his original scheme of collecting funds for missionaries' libraries in the colonies for a plan to set up similar libraries for the clergy at home. Bray put forward his scheme in 1697 in his *Essay towards promoting all Necessary and Useful Knowledge, both Divine and Human, in all parts of his Majesty's Dominions.* Sixty-one libraries were founded by Dr Bray between 1704 and his death in 1730, and more than a hundred others were established by a society, Dr Bray's Associates for Founding Clerical Libraries and Supporting Negro Schools, in the period 1757–1807, most of them "for the use of the parochial clergy".[1] Another result of Dr Bray's efforts was the Act for the Better Preservation of Parochial Libraries in that part of Great Britain called England, 1709, though unfortunately the Act was of little effect in its worthy aim, most of the Bray libraries being neglected for lack of funds, a fate which overtook the majority of their Scottish counterparts too.

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw great activity in the provision of popular libraries in the south-eastern counties of Scotland and in the north-east of England. The most famous of these schemes was Provost Samuel Brown's system of 'itinerating libraries' initiated in East Lothian in 1817. (Much of the interest in these libraries is derived from the similarity of their general arrangements to those of the county libraries of the early 1920's.) Brown's aims for his scheme were given briefly by his son, the Rev. J. C. Brown, in evidence before the 1849 Select Committee on Public Libraries, and were more fully described in the Rev. William Brown's *Memoir relative to Itinerating Libraries* which had a wide circulation on the Continent. The principal object of the scheme was to promote the interests of religion, and the plan was "to have a library within a mile-and-a-half of every inhabitant of the country, if possible" and "to station a division of 50 volumes in every village and hamlet where a librarian could be found".

[1] House of Commons, Select Committee on Public Libraries, *Report, Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix* (1849), Question 3331. This Report is cited briefly later as the 1849 *Report* or as Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), and the references are usually to the question-number in the evidence.

The books were to be removed at the end of two years, and a general exchange effected. The greatest number of these libraries was fifty.[1] Like so many other similar schemes which had depended on private means of support, the success of these libraries declined after the death of their founder. Samuel Smiles, for instance, giving evidence in 1849, said that attempts to form public libraries in the West Riding of Yorkshire had generally been failures. "So long as the books in the libraries were attractive, the people generally resorted to them; but as soon as the books became old and had been read out, they ceased to attract the readers, and in the end they were failures."[2]

Edward Edwards (1812–86), an assistant in the Department of Printed Books at the British Museum at the time of the 1849 *Report*, was guided by these early failures: "Without some assured provision of the means of continuing increase—as well as of simple preservation—no man ever secured to posterity the true advantage of a public library. To those persons, therefore, who took thought of such matters, two principles to start with seemed plain. The one that the new libraries should be formed in a catholic spirit. The other, that they should be freed from all dependence, either in gifts or in current 'subscriptions' for their permanent support. The first principle involved the corollary that the new institutions and their management should stand entirely aloof from party influences in Politics or in Religion. . . . The second principle involved the corollary that the maintenance must be by rate, levied on the whole tax-paying community, and administered by its elective and responsible functionaries."[3]

Just how important a firm foundation of legislation and financial support is may be judged also from the history of early efforts to establish public libraries in Canada. The Superintendent of Education for Upper Canada, Egerton Ryerson, had a plan for public libraries not dissimilar from that of many early county libraries in Britain whereby the libraries were attached to schools but available to adults and children alike. By an Act of 1850 Ryerson was able to provide for a grant to the libraries, and in 1853 he made further arrangements, including recommended book-lists, an annual grant, and discounts from publishers for the

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 1772, 1775, and 1813.
[2] *Ibid.*, Q. 1952.
[3] Edwards, Edward, *Memoirs of Libraries* (1859), vol. i, p. 775.

books. Twenty years later there were 1334 libraries in the schools with stocks exceeding a quarter of a million books. However, after Ryerson's death the libraries declined for lack of continued sponsorship, and their funds were used for other purposes, including the mechanics' institutes.[1]

The first municipal rate-supported free library in the United Kingdom was opened in November 1848 in Warrington. This was followed in 1849 by the establishment of a public library in Salford. Both of these institutions were founded under the provisions of the Act of 1845 "for encouraging the establishment of museums in large towns".

The first true Public Libraries Act came on August 14th, 1850, as the direct result of the 1849 *Report*, to which Edward Edwards had contributed so much. Its passage into law was largely secured by the endeavours of two Members, William Ewart and Joseph Brotherton; the former was Member of Parliament for Dumfries Burghs from 1841 until 1868, and allied himself with many progressive causes of the period, including the abolition of capital punishment and the freedom of the Press; (it is not surprising, therefore, to find the name of Ewart alongside that of Passmore Edwards, another great library pioneer, on a committee of "An Association for promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge", founded on February 13th, 1851); Brotherton was the Member for Salford from 1832 until 1857, and he too had a distinguished career as a social reformer.

In 1850 Edward Edwards became the first librarian of the Manchester Public Library. His contribution to the library service can scarcely be overestimated. This is not to say that his efforts were always enthusiastically received: indeed, his statistics for the 1849 *Report* were criticized, and his work at Manchester led to so much friction between him and his committee that he had to leave the service, and after that time never had a permanent appointment.

Among others Dr E. A. Savage has suggested: "The true founders [of the municipal public-library movement], however, were the lower middle and working classes who had learned to value the cheap books then being supplied by enterprising publishers (those of Edinburgh taking the lead) or the books they could borrow from mechanics' institutes. They had come to

[1] Stubbs, Gordon T., in *Canadian Library* (March 1964), pp. 264–267.

believe strongly in education through reading. Without their pressure the Bill of 1850 (which came 20 years before the famous Education Act) would not have become law".[1] Again, in the Library Association's Centenary Assessment pamphlet, *A Century of Public Library Service*, at p. 3 there is the statement: "No-one forced local authorities to provide public libraries. They came by public demand."

Democratically satisfying as these suggestions may be, a close examination of the first fifty years' history of the public-library movement and of the years immediately preceding their foundation will show rather that the movement was sponsored by members of the library profession, notably, of course, by Edwards, and by persons drawn from the upper strata of society who were aware that the absence of public-library facilities for all classes was quite unjustifiable. By no means all the upper classes were in favour of the libraries. Colonel Sibthorp's extravagances during the debates on the 1850 Bill present one point of view. Instead of endeavouring to afford the people industrious and profitable employment he supposed "they would be thinking of supplying the working classes with quoits, peg-tops, and foot-ball. They should teach the people to read and write. What would be the use of these libraries to those who could not read or write?" Parliament "would soon be thinking of introducing the performances of Punch for the amusement of the people. The Bill was wholly uncalled for . . . Instead of calling upon the unfortunate ratepayers to pay for these amusements, he, for one, would be more disposed to put his hand in his pocket in order to enable them to enjoy them altogether free from taxation".[2]

Another member, Colonel Chatterton, objected to the 1850 Bill too, "for it cannot be imagined that a peasant, fatigued after his daily toil, could be so impressed with the love of literature, or the study of the antique, as to set off, even under the influence of a bright summer evening, to walk six or seven miles to improve his mind, and then walk back to ponder over and digest what he had seen and heard. Sir, I think this proposition monstrous and ill-timed."[3]

[1] Savage, Ernest A., *The Scotsman* (February 20th, 1950).

[2] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates for the year 1849*, vol. cxi, col. 1174–1175.

[3] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates for the year 1850*, vol. cxi, col. 481.

A more considered attitude was expressed by John Imray, of Aberdeen, in 1849, who thought that the feeling of some landed proprietors was "that they were raising the lower classes too highly by giving them information and that it is better to keep them without it".[1]

Admittedly, there is no evidence that the first public libraries were *forced* on the people, but there is much to indicate that the bulk of the population were antagonistic or, at the best, apathetic; and if there was a demand demonstrated by some persons it was by a vocal minority rather than by the masses. The lower classes who constituted a majority had not expressed any desire for the provision of municipal library services. It is agreed that there was plenty in the community life of the times to suggest an increasing confidence in education through reading, but this proves an appreciation of the value of books, and does not mean an automatic demand for the non-existent public library. The 1850 Act was passed despite lack of proof that the public libraries were wanted. That they were needed is a different matter.

These views are not universally accepted, and K. C. Harrison in his book *Public Libraries Today*[2] submits that the emphases are wrong, and unhappily in the process distorts some of the present writer's statements. Harrison's desire to set the emphasis aright springs from understandable and commonly held preconceptions. Because reading was increasing, among the artisans particularly, in the nineteenth century, the need for libraries was obvious. Because public libraries are now receiving some recognition of their valuable services, the line of thought runs on to presume that inevitably public (*i.e.* municipal) libraries must have been demanded, and obviously the people to clamour for them must have been the people who had no substantial private libraries, the working classes.

Alas, as far as the mid-nineteenth century public were concerned, it is true that "public libraries have owed nothing to public demand, but everything to individual initiative and enthusiasm".[3]

In his comparative study of progress in France, Great Britain, and the United States, Jean Hassenforder suggests that "it does

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 3104.
[2] *Op. cit.* (1963), pp. 2–4.
[3] Kenyon, Sir Frederic, *Libraries and Museums* (1930), p. 49.

not seem that public library development in the Anglo-Saxon countries received any great contribution from the working class movement. In the United States they were otherwise preoccupied. In the cultural field they created their own libraries and their support for such activities locally by way of establishing a public library is seen only occasionally. In England the first public libraries were the work of a minority. Those who promoted the libraries usually came from the upper classes although even among them there was a divided attitude. Later, in contrast, when the public libraries were beginning to show their capabilities, the trade unions became a contributory factor supporting their development and in 1884 they approved a motion to this effect. In France it was the middle classes who formed the majority of members in the Franklin Society, which association seems to have had great influence and practical effect in favour of the nineteenth century public libraries. . . .

"In all three countries, a minority mainly from the wealthier and middle classes were at the heart of the movement. The working classes played a supporting role or seemed relatively indifferent."[1]

There is no doubt that in the mid-nineteenth century the thirst for knowledge was increasing as the frontiers of science and geographical discovery were thrust farther afield. Outlooks were widening as a result of the religious, economic, and political consequences of the Industrial Revolution, and this was reflected in the educational reforms of the period—the revival of co-operation in Rochdale in 1844, the Quaker movements of 1847, the Working Men's Colleges, the Club and Institute Union (1862), and the work of the University Commissions of 1850.[2] Even in these movements, however, much of the enthusiasm was instilled into the cause, as in the case of public libraries, as the result of the missionary work of a few men anxious for the social improvement of the community rather than by a spontaneous popular demand.

The suggestion that the Public Libraries Bill would not have passed into law in 1850 without the pressure of the people seems

[1] Hassenforder, Jean, *Développement comparé des bibliothèques publiques en France en Grande-Bretagne et aux Etats-Unis, 1850–1914* (1967), p. 112.

[2] *Cf.* Dobbs, A. E., *Education and Social Movements, 1700–1850* (1919), pp. 141 and 241.

an exaggeration. It may be worth recalling that the Parliament which passed it was voted into power by an electorate of about 670,000 when the total population of the whole British Isles was about 27,000,000—*i.e.*, one person in forty was an elector. Apart from the deficiencies in the electoral system, there is another important factor to be borne in mind—namely, the inability of the people to convey their opinions to the Government. There was not the easy exchange of opinion throughout the country which, at the end of the century, was to be brought about by extended and improved communications, and it is primarily through such easy interchange of ideas and viewpoints and good communications that a consolidated public opinion is formed and governments influenced. In any case, the example of Scottish burgh library legislation from about 1930 onward is a certain demonstration that public need and demand do not necessarily succeed in persuading Parliament to pass an Act despite general agreement among the political parties about the need for it. Repeated representation was made by the Scottish Library Association for the removal of the statutory rate limit of threepence in the pound in burghs, and was met with sympathy and consideration from all parties in the House. Yet it was not until 1955 that the limit was removed. Equally it was only after the 1955 Scottish Act that authority was available to local authorities to support the Scottish Central Library, to surrender their library powers to another authority to seek an improved service, and to extend purchasing powers to non-book materials.

Evidence to show how interested people were becoming in reading in the mid-nineteenth century is abundant. Several periodicals had weekly circulations exceeding fifty thousand, and books were being bought regularly by many people. Some idea of the number of books sold may be judged from the prices at which they were offered. Most of the reputable publishers ran their own special cheap series. These included Cassell's serials at 7*d.* per part and their 'National Library' of classics at 3*d.* each; Routledge offered books (including Johnson's *Dictionary*) at 6*d.* each; the religious societies sold the classics at 1*d.* and 2*d.* It is not surprising, therefore, to learn from the 1849 *Report* that the witnesses were convinced of the need for public libraries, so great was the demand for books. Ten years earlier Lord Brougham had said, in an address in the House of Lords on the subject of the Spitalfields

Weavers: "I know it is very often said, and indeed has been said tonight, that the poor have too much to do in the way of gaining their daily bread to cultivate learning. Those who say that are ignorant of their habits, are ignorant of their tastes, are profoundly ignorant of their capacities, and more ignorant of the salutary effects which that kind of tuition is calculated to produce. Why, there has existed for the last half-century in the eastern part of this metropolis a society composed of the humblest journeymen labourers whose reading has been the mathematical sciences to the most abstruse of those sciences. Five men out of those whom I now address, who sow not neither do they spin, who toil not any more than the lilies of the field, who have money and funds and teachers as well as time at your command, not five of you I would venture to say, could read those books which are complained of by this society of journeymen artisans as not profound enough in the mathematical sciences."[1]

But even forty years after this speech another student of social conditions and their effect on reading was still unconvinced that the labouring classes were as literary-minded as Lord Brougham had believed. "The working classes were, it was somewhat gratuitously assumed, panting for knowledge, and nothing stood in the way of their gratification but the various duties levied by the excise upon the materials of printing and upon paper. It must be owned that there was but little foundation for this notion, and that it was rather a question of what ought to be than of what actually existed. There were, it is true, a certain number of working men anxious for self-improvement, but their number was not large, nor, in view of the peculiar circumstances of their class, is it probable that it ever will be. A man must be very exceptionally constituted if, after nine or ten hours passed at a carpenter's bench, or in an engineer's workshop, he is prepared to sit down to mathematical or general scientific study."[2] And how much more true this must have been in Lord Brougham's time, when the weavers worked an average day of fourteen hours.

The 1849 *Report* is the most comprehensive single statement

[1] Board of Education, Public Libraries Committee, *Report on Public Libraries in England and Wales* (1927), p. 13. Cited later as Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1927).

[2] Hitchman, Francis, in *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. xliii (1880–81), p. 385.

on the views of the time concerning the provision of libraries, and though the persons called to give evidence were by no means unbiased, their answers are illuminating. It is worth noting too that opinions expressed by persons working towards the same goal were not necessarily unanimous.

Little positive evidence was brought before the Committee to show that there was a demand for the provision of municipal-library services, and where such a claim was advanced, as in the case of Aberdeen by John Webster, an advocate of that city, later events were to conflict with the prophecies. Answering the question "Would there be any inclination on the part of the municipal body at Aberdeen, the town council, do you think, to form a public library?" he replied, "The town council of Aberdeen have, I believe, already petitioned in favour of the object contemplated by the motion for the Committee, and I think I may say that the town council, and in general the middle and professional classes of Aberdeen, would be extremely willing to do something in aid of such a purpose." And in answer to "Do you think such an institution is much wanted in Aberdeen, and that it would do great good to the working classes?" Webster replied, "I am perfectly satisfied that both to them and to the class above them, the mercantile and professional men of Aberdeen, it would do great good."[1] Yet Aberdeen had to wait until 1872 for its first ballot to decide on public-library provision, and then only to find the project defeated by 488 votes to 134. Perhaps the offer by the Mechanics' Institute directors to hand over the building and library of that organization had some effect twelve years later when the second ballot took place. In 1884 the Library Acts were adopted by 891 votes to 264. (1155 votes were cast when the population of Aberdeen was about 115,000!)

Thomas Jones, Librarian of Chetham's Library, speaking on the question of keeping the library open in the evenings for the sake of businessmen and mechanics who could not use it in the daytime, told the Committee, "There was a very large number of persons who petitioned that it should be kept open till seven or eight, I forget which, and one summer it was kept open, and so few came to avail themselves of the access that it was discontinued by the trustees."[2]

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 737–738.
[2] *Ibid.*, Q. 1130.

Further, one witness who had already shown a practical interest in providing a library service in Buckinghamshire, the Rev. W. R. Fremantle, answered the question "Do you not think it is almost useless to have schools in villages and to instruct the people, that is to give them the means to read, unless they have something to read in after life, after they have left school?" with this pessimistic reply: "You must not expect too much of the labouring population; they read very little."[1]

Where witnesses approved the need for the public library they almost unanimously showed themselves to be concerned with its effect as a counter-agent to evils rather than as a positive force for educational or recreational benefit. Even after sympathetic answers had been given to their questions members of the Committee put others which almost certainly called for replies praising the library as a useful factor in moral reform. This concern for public morality and the use of libraries as a substitute for less profitable pastimes may seem, more than a century after the events, poor argument when so many stronger reasons for them appeared to exist, but the unstable economic conditions of the working classes with their anti-social consequences were an integral part of community life, affecting all levels of society. Thus, employers and other responsible persons were forced to seek all possible means of solving these working-class problems.

Even before the public-library movement was mooted the use of literature had been proposed as a means of diverting the workers' leisure into, at the least, harmless channels. Inevitably when the members of the clergy were discussing public libraries they made such comments as: "Regarding the Ceres Library, I rejoice to learn that such an institution has been commenced in my native Parish. I trust that it will be attended with much advantage to the Public, and under the blessing of God will be the means of promoting the moral and religious improvement of many."[2] Again, however, the suggestion did not come from the lower classes.

Robert Thomson, in his anonymously issued *Treatise on the Progress of Literature* in 1834, wrote: "One great advantage of literature is, that it withdraws men from the subjection of low

[1] Public Libraries Committee. *Report* (1849), Q. 1398.

[2] Letter from Rev. William Nicolson to Secretary of Ceres (Fife) Library (1829).

habits and ignoble pursuits, by furnishing a continual subject for the exercise of the imagination, and thus diverting it from the operation of those passions and habits to which it would otherwise furnish the most powerful auxiliary". Thomson saw in literature too the counter-agent to the "indulgence of those vices which affect chiefly the health and prosperity of the individual" among the higher classes. The lower classes, he believed, had even greater benefits to find in literature. "The lower classes are under severe restrictions with regard to the class of vices now alluded to, because, from the narrowness of their circumstances, a very short career of profligacy would be sufficient to bring them to poverty and ruin, and would afterwards, through the temptation of want, lead them into some offence against the laws of society. The cultivation of literature, even to the limited extent compatible with their circumstances, by furnishing them with an innocent source of gratification, rescues them from the dominion of evil habits, to which they are probably more liable than persons of a higher class, from the circumstances of their ordinary pursuits being less intellectual; and it also frees them from those violent inroads of sensual indulgence, to which they are rendered the more prone by the general state of restraint to which they are subject. The same cause, by elevating and liberalizing their views, affords likewise an antidote to the operation of selfish passions, to which, from the hardships of their condition, they are more peculiarly exposed."[1]

In the few years following Thomson's *Treatise* there were several attempts in Parliament, sponsored notably by James Buckingham, the Member for Sheffield, to introduce legislation for the "establishment, by the joint aid of the government and the local authorities, and residents on the spot, of walks and gardens, or open spaces for athletic and healthy exercises in the open air in the immediate vicinity of every town, of an extent and character adapted to its population, and of district and parish libraries, museums and reading-rooms, accessible at the lowest rate of charge, so as to admit of one or the other being visited in any weather, and at any time, with the rigid exclusion of all intoxicating drinks of every kind from all such places, whether in the open air or closed".

Buckingham's hope was "to draw off, by innocent pleasurable recreation and instruction, all who can be thus weaned from

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 241 and 244.

habits of drinking, and in whom those habits may not be so deeply rooted as to resist all attempts at this moral method of cure".

He went on to say that "the object would be to provide Public Institutions for the assembling together in the winter—when open air exercises cannot be so well enjoyed—of all classes of the inhabitants who desire social intercourse without the necessity of seeking it at the public house. Such buildings should be erected at the public cost, in the same manner as the gardens, grounds, and baths; and they should contain halls for conversational meetings—rooms for benefit societies, clubs, choral societies and committees of all kinds—a spacious theatre for lectures and scientific experiments—a museum for natural history—another for specimens of manufactures—a gallery of the fine arts for sculpture and paintings—and a library for general use. The building once formed, many of the nobility and neighbouring gentry, as well as the wealthy inhabitants of the town, would, by donation and otherwise, contribute progressively to enrich it in various ways; and a very moderate amount of subscription—when the building was once free—would supply all that could be required. . . .

"We shall see as many public walks, gardens and pleasure grounds in the neighbourhood of all our towns, as are now to be found on the Continent of Europe; and in every place of ten thousand inhabitants, a public institution, embracing a museum, gallery, library, theatre, and places of innocent and instructive enjoyment, accessible to the humblest classes—while in twenty years from their foundation, all will be free of further cost or incumbrance to the funds of the community. . . .

"It is hardly possible to overrate the amount of public good which would flow, in a thousand ways, from such fountains of health, and knowledge, and pleasure, as these institutions would prove."[1]

Buckingham's plan is interesting in two aspects other than its moral aim. His description of the projected 'public institutions' is a fair prophecy of what Jennie Lee was still striving to achieve in 1965 in *A Policy for the Arts—the First Steps*.[2] Buckingham was also expressing the naïve view, to be repeated in the Public Libraries Act 1850 (which made no provision for the purchase of

[1] House of Commons, *Parliamentary Debates* ('Hansard'), vol. xxix (1835), col. 571–574.

[2] *Cmnd. 2601* (1965).

books for the libraries), that if the institution is established donations will be forthcoming to equip it.

George Dawson, a travelling lecturer, speaking to the 1849 Committee on the improvement of the working classes, said: "I find that the increase of reading is very marked indeed; there is a decrease, I think, of that turbulent spirit which I consider to be owing to ignorance; I have always found that when the people read most they are least open to be played upon by mere appeals to feelings."[1]

The Rev. J. C. Brown, son of the Haddington Provost who founded the itinerating libraries, was rather non-committal, though obviously sympathetic, for he told the Committee that the libraries had a good general effect on the character of the people. He went on: "I am not able to bring forward cases of decided conversion or moral reformation; but everywhere people spoke favourably of the effect of stationing a library in a village." In answer to "Was the moral and literary character of the neighbourhood improved by this system?" he admitted that "there was no marked change", and he was "not prepared to say that they became more orderly, but they did not become more disorderly". At this point the Committee perhaps felt that his answers were not positive enough, and the question was put: "Did they become more fond of reading?" to which the answer was: "Much more fond of reading." "Then it had the effect probably of diverting them from more injurious pursuits?" With this Mr Brown agreed, "Decidedly."[2]

Samuel Smiles was more convinced of the efficacy of libraries, saying that "amongst those who read, unquestionably there has been an improvement in their habits of order, temperance, and character generally". Again the Committee pressed the point: "You think that, as the habit of temperance extends, not only the inclination but the necessity for reading extends with it, as a means of filling up the intervals of leisure which the working people have."[3] Smiles gave it as his opinion: "Give a man an interesting book to take home with him to his family, and it is probable that the man will stay at home and read his book in preference to going out and spending his time in dissipation or in idleness."[4]

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 1266.
[2] *Ibid.*, Q. 1821–1826.
[3] *Ibid.*, Q. 1963 and 1967.
[4] *Ibid.*, Q. 2001.

Similarly, the Rev. H. Mackenzie, of St Martin-in-the-Fields, thought decidedly that the establishment of local reading-rooms would take the working classes away from public-houses by affording them a comfortable shelter for the evening.[1] The evidence offered by the Secretary of the Religious Tract Society was almost wholly devoted to showing how great was the moral value of providing books, and seven extracts from recent Annual Reports of the Society were printed as part of the 1849 *Report.*[2] These were all from responsible persons in ships, schools, destitute districts, and factories, who vouched for the improvement in behaviour of the people with whom they were especially concerned.

Even when dealing with members of the working classes who did read, the Committee and its sympathetic witnesses showed their zeal for reform, for in many cases they did not approve of the books which were being read, and believed that the future public library should provide material which did not contain "doctrines of a doubtful social character, as well as other objectionable features".[3]

There was some cause for such concern. In Ireland, for example, the Repeal Association had been established to organize local agitation and to inculcate the principle of nationalism in various local districts. The Association in 1844 adopted Rules for the Establishment of Repeal Reading Rooms deliberately to "diffuse among the people useful information, and early intelligence on all subjects of public interest, especially on the great national question of repeal; to collect and combine popular opinion in aid of repeal: to afford a source of rational occupation for the leisure hours of the industrious classes, where they may be instigated to increased patriotism, temperance, and virtue. And especially to promote the weekly collection of the Repeal Fund, and to extend the Repeal Organization, so as to confer on the Repealers in the several localities the influence they should exercise as a compact body".

Doubts were to be expressed too during Parliament's discussion of the 1850 Bill on the dire effects of the libraries, which, according to Sir R. H. Inglis, were "clearly adapted, not merely for the purpose of procuring books, but also of creating lecture rooms, which might give rise to an unhealthy agitation". Mr Spooner,

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 2083.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 170–171.
[3] *Ibid.*, Q. 2696.

Member for Warwickshire, had also expressed fears that the "libraries might be converted into normal schools of agitation".

On the other hand, some Members of Parliament saw the expenditure on public libraries as well spent if for no other reason than that they would be a force against crime. Their great advocate, Brotherton, contended that the "Bill would provide the cheapest police that could possibly be established", and Robert A. Slaney, Member for Shrewsbury and an advocate of rural, economic, education, and health reforms, supported this view. "Where libraries had been established . . . they had been found highly beneficial to the working classes . . . because by encouraging habits which kept the working man from the public-house, they lessened the incentives to a dissolute life, and, consequently, to idleness and crime; which cost the country much more than all the libraries they could build under this Bill."[1]

The attack on the gin-palaces was maintained by William Lovett, Manager of the National Hall, High Holborn, and Superintendent of the Schools, who did not think that there were any libraries or publications attached to them, whereas the coffee-houses and reading-rooms were credited with much moral improvement. (There were, of course, libraries in the public-houses, too; their proprietors presumably catered for the reading demand as a simple business prospect.) On working-class habits Lovett said, "In the first place, they are not so drunken as they were . . . which beneficial change I attribute principally to the great increase of coffee-houses and reading-rooms."[2]

In Scotland too it was felt that a library service could be an alternative to drunkenness and the brutish evils of the time. Indeed, Robert Burns, in 1791, had written to Sir John Sinclair pointing out that he had omitted mention of the Monkland Friendly Society Library from his *Statistical Account of Scotland.* He went on: "To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge, is certainly of very great consequence, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn for reading and reflection, is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and besides, raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a

[1] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates for the year 1850*, vol. cix., col. 840–848.

[2] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 2767.

gentleman in the parish, Robert Riddell, Esq: of Glenriddel, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple, as to be practicable in any corner of the country: and so useful, as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman, who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species, whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artisan, a matter worthy of his attention."

Among the books in this library Burns listed Blair's *Sermons*, Robertson's *History of Scotland*, Hume's *History of the Stewarts*, *The Spectator*, *Idler*, *Adventurer*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*, *Observer*, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*, *Chrysal*, *Don Quixotte* (*sic*), and *Joseph Andrews*, and he concluded: "A peasant who can read, and enjoy such books, is certainly a much superior being to his neighbour, who, perhaps, stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brutes he drives."[1]

Burns himself was largely responsible for operating this library, and Riddell described him as the treasurer, librarian, and censor to this little society.

William Chambers, the Edinburgh publisher, reported to the 1849 Committee on the Peebles Public Library: "In 1847 the Committee took the state of the institution into serious consideration. They felt that it was absurd to rail at public houses or the idle habits of the young men, without making some effort to supply a counterpoise which might operate beneficially against the allurements to evil. This was the more necessary as an agreement had become general to close shops and places of business at eight o'clock. It was accordingly agreed to re-model the institution."[2]

Even the most strenuous advocate of the library movement must have been impressed at the force of its effects as described by John Imray, of Aberdeen, in answer to the question "Have you known persons who apparently came with habits of disorder gradually reclaimed, in consequence of reading in the library, to habits of order?" "I have known men of from 20 to 30 who, when they came, smoked their pipes in the school-room, overturned the forms, and did all kinds of mischief, and now they are perfectly quiet and orderly, and they dress better; instead of rags, they come

[1] Sinclair, Sir John, *The Statistical Account of Scotland* (1792), vol. iii, pp. 598–599.

[2] Public Libraries, Committee, *Report* (1849), pp. 251–252.

with whole clothes (though of the poorest kind still), and they sit down in the library with the greatest quietness and decorum, and read the books."[1]

However, not all the witnesses were prepared to commit themselves so fully, and a few were disposed not so much to claim the good effect of libraries on moral behaviour of the working classes as to show how the decline of drunkenness and violence was progressing without their aid. A missionary of the London Domestic Mission, Charles Corkran, questioned on the improvement or deterioration of the moral character of the people in Spitalfields, said, "I have been informed, in conversation with persons living in the neighbourhood, that the moral character of the people has decidedly improved of late years; that there is not the same drunkenness, nor the same violence, nor the cock-fighting, and similar sports, that used to go on 20 years ago." But he admitted that there was "nothing which could at all tend to civilize the people in that way".[2] John Baxter Langley, a past Secretary of the Manchester Athenaeum, went farther to suggest that "the spread of temperance has had a very good effect upon the mechanics' institutes".[3]

If it is true that the public did not demand public libraries as a single body, or through the normal elective rights they possessed by virtue of the Library Act after it was passed, how else can their opinion be judged in the matter of library provision? Perhaps, by an investigation of the organization of the mechanics' institutes and kindred bodies, or by the views expressed by responsible members of these institutions, some idea of the views of the people can be gained.

In 1853 the 700 mechanics' institutes had 120,000 members, and were issuing annually more than two million volumes. James Hole, the Honorary Secretary of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, in a prize essay for the Society of Arts expressed his view thus: "The large circulation of their books has cultivated a taste for reading, and rendered it profitable to produce the most excellent works at an almost nominal price. Some people are disposed to regard the cheapness of books as the cause of the great increase of reading: it would be truer to say, that primarily it was

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 3213.
[2] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 2734–2736.
[3] *Ibid.*, Q. 2448.

rather the effect of the increased taste for reading, which these Institutions first helped to foster. They created a paying public to take them. Many of the books are read by the family of the member as well as by himself."[1] This statement, of course, immediately creates the impression of a great reading public among the manual-labouring classes, but a little later in the same work Hole dispels this by pointing out that mechanics were not generally attracted to the institutes, which were largely patronized by the clerical and merchant type.[2] Samuel Smiles too thought that popular libraries were frequented by "the upper class of artisans, decidedly". He went on: "I have remarked already that mechanics' institutes, so called, are not institutes for working people, but are principally supported by the middle classes, and by the higher order of skilled artisans."[3]

In a survey of reading in England in the mid-nineteenth century James Wellard has noted that "artisans established for themselves other forms of libraries, more closely adapted to their requirements and habits".[4] While this is ample proof of their interest in books and their confidence in the efficacy of books as educators, it seems to be an implicit argument against the demand for public libraries. Wherever they read, these people had established their habitual rendezvous and had organized their regular reading practices. Why should they be anxious to change their practice when they were being so well served by the organizations which they themselves had created for their own use, which they had devised as specific means of satisfying their own particular demands? Ditzion, considering a similar position in the United States about the same period, concluded that cheap books were a factor in increasing the demand for reading material, but were not necessarily, as a result, an influence for the benefit of public libraries.[5] Lovett gave added weight to this view in his evidence before the 1849 Committee: "I judge from the efforts which have been made by the working classes to establish libraries for themselves. The better-paid mechanics or artisans exert themselves to

[1] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 11.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 17–19.

[3] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 2000.

[4] Wellard, James, *Book Selection* (1937), p. 15.

[5] Ditzion, Sydney, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* (1947), pp. 79 and 192.

have little libraries of their own. I know a great number who have very respectable libraries."[1]

Over and over again the evidence offered in support of the public libraries is based on the readers' success in supplying themselves with books. Had they *failed* to get the books, perhaps there would have been a stronger feeling that alternative methods of book supply were necessary or desirable. As it was, their success demonstrated that when the people wanted something they set about getting it by the simplest method, creating it by their own direct efforts rather than by the more tortuous means of approaching Parliament to arrange for the task to be done for them. It must be borne in mind that the people of that time could not be expected to foresee the great public-library system which was to grow up in this country, nor, indeed, could the benefits of such a system have been readily envisaged by them. Even the advantages of belonging to the mechanics' institutes were not understood by many, and in a letter to the *Leeds Mercury* these views were expressed by a Secretary of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes: "Very often it will be found that the advantages which such an institution is calculated to afford, are not appreciated simply because they have not been enjoyed. Ignorance is not only a cause, but an effect; and if we could but once put the treasures of knowledge within the reach of many of the working-classes they would be glad to provide them afterwards for themselves."[2]

Another organization which set out to benefit "the useful classes" politically, morally, and socially was the Working Men's Association, which had obviously among its members people who appreciated such "treasures of knowledge" and the use of libraries in distributing them. Yet when this Association drew up its programme in 1836 it decided to support any schemes for national education, but limited its efforts in the library field to forming "a library of reference and useful information". This again demonstrates that bodies interested in the promotion of education generally and libraries in particular did not necessarily think of their provision on the same scale, at national or municipal level; in any case, they were content, through choice or ignorance, with the service which a privately organized library could offer.

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 2796.

[2] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 178.

Hole, who can be taken to represent the advanced opinion of the period, himself wrote of his lack of faith in town councils as suitable bodies to administer funds for public education: "We have no hopes for them at present. They have already the power to establish museums and libraries—a power of which they do not avail themselves. The truth is, they represent the *ignorant prejudices*, quite as much as the good sense, of their constituents."[1] This was written two years after the passing of the first Public Libraries Act. It is unlikely that Hole would be unaware of the adoption of the Act (or similar enactments) by Warrington, Salford, Bolton, Liverpool, and Manchester; nor is it likely that he would repeat the blunder made in Parliament by J. F. Stanford, the Member for Reading, who said that not one museum had been erected by 1849 under the Museums Act of four years before. It seems more probable that Hole was conversant with the position and with the discussions which had taken place in Parliament on the subject, and he was here expressing his surprise that the public had not hastened to persuade their respective local authorities to adopt the Act with the alacrity which the public-library promoters would have had the public believe.

Hole's interest in libraries was purely educative, with the consequence that he believed all their functions could be fulfilled thoroughly by the mechanics' institutes. For instance, he advocated government grants to the institutes' libraries, but those were not to be used for "that portion of the library devoted to works of imagination and the lighter class of literature".[2] While seeing the need for government aid in this matter he attacked the lack of libraries, or their insufficiency, in the most direct way; in this he showed his opinion of the future of public libraries. Referring to rural areas, where parish libraries might then have been established, Hole suggested that the union of mechanics' institutes "might also give important aid to the cause of adult education by the establishment of itinerating village libraries. The original capital for buying the books would be furnished by the Union, obtained mostly from gentlemen in the localities to be benefited, and the subscription of the readers to be at such a rate as would pay the entire expenses of management, and replace the books

[1] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 101.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

as they became worn out. The books should be removed at short and regular periods from village to village, and thus they would preserve the constant stimulus of novelty."[1]

Yorkshire Mechanics' Institutes Union, whilst providing locally an alternative solution, were also accentuating the need in places where a similar powerful organization did not exist to undertake the duty. By maintaining a service of this kind the Union implied that there was no need for alternative library provision, and so effective were the Yorkshire rural libraries that in 1897 F. Curzon, one of Hole's successors in the office of Secretary of the Union, was encouraged to say: "These village libraries must always be in existence, however popular, useful, and successful the ordinary public library may be, for the Public Libraries Act can never properly reach these many villages. It would be a very important and a very good thing if other parts of Great Britain, which have remained so long without public libraries, could carry out such an organization as we have in Yorkshire. We supply some two hundred villages and about fifteen thousand readers with books."[2] (Curzon did not apparently consider parishes capable of maintaining the village libraries, although they were empowered to do so singly or in combination with their neighbours. He had, of course, much justification for this view because by the end of the nineteenth century only twenty parishes had adopted the Public Libraries Acts, and great weight was lent to his argument by the necessity for library provision by the Union.) It is perhaps worth noting that after nearly half a century of public-library legislation Curzon did not choose to suggest an alteration in the Acts to allow local authorities wider powers for collaboration, in order that they might provide the circulating village libraries.

Even William Lovett—whose guiding mission throughout life was education for the improvement of social conditions, and who many times advocated revised legislation for it—did not give much support to the pre-1850 movement for local-authority libraries. He protested that free education should be provided on a national scale, administered by local boards, and financed from public funds, but he never went so far in his advocacy of public libraries.

[1] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 131.

[2] Curzon, F., in *Transactions and Proceedings of the Second International Library Conference held in London (July 13–16, 1897)*, p. 236.

Advising his "working-class brethren" in 1846 to efforts for the reform and perfection of their social and political institutions, he wrote: "Another great essential you should aim at, is the establishing of libraries and reading-rooms in sufficient numbers, in different districts of your towns and villages, to which the young and old of both sexes should have free access after the labours of the day, as well as to borrow books from them to take to their homes; as also to have some share in the management."[1] He proposed "travelling libraries and missionaries" and "libraries for general circulation", but, as he wrote in his *Life and Struggles*, "no other steps were taken by me beyond the putting forth of the proposal".[2] In view of the association which Lovett had with the London Mechanics' Institute, and his admiration for the movement at large, it seems reasonable to believe his proposals were a projection of the good work then being done by the institutes.

But the mechanics'-institute libraries were not supplied free of charge, and the cost, though small, was an important deterrent to the labouring classes. Smiles, before the 1849 Committee, answering a question on the demand for books and "what obstructions are there to the indulgence of this desire on the part of the people; have they any means of buying books?" reported, "They have not the means of buying sufficient books, and the amount to be paid to those mechanics' institutes acts as an obstacle to some extent; . . . any amount charged is an obstacle."[3] Later he remarked: "There are very few poor men who can form anything like a respectable library, even at the lowest price of books. The best new books are quite beyond their reach."[4]

The better the mechanics'-institute libraries the greater was their competition with the new municipal libraries, and because of the importance attached to them by the institute leaders it is not surprising to find them often praised for their part in the work of the institutes. Hole emphasized that the library was "the most valuable feature of these institutes",[5] and Langley, of the Manchester Athenaeum, agreed: "If it were not for the libraries

[1] Lovett, William, *Life and Struggles of William Lovett in his Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge and Freedom* (1876), p. 432.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 248–254 and pp. 325–329.

[3] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 1987.

[4] *Ibid.*, Q. 2009.

[5] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 26.

they would cease to exist; they hold a continued existence in consequence of the attraction which the library affords . . . Lectures unquestionably do not pay; the permanent success of the institutions depends completely upon the libraries."[1] And time was to confirm this opinion, for the library remained an attraction when all the lectures, exhibitions, and other services had been abandoned for lack of support.[2]

At the time of the Public Libraries Bill's passage through Parliament in 1849–50, this point was made—namely, that the public libraries were not needed because of the already successful mechanics' institutes. The Member for Carlisle, P. H. Howard, "objected to the Bill, because it would tend to check the efforts of private enterprise in support of mechanics' institutions and the like".[3]

Striking examples of the delay in public-library provision because of excellent alternative services are to be found in the cases of Belfast and Swindon. In the former the Public Libraries Acts were not adopted until 1882, and even then it was after much argument. The alternative was not a mechanics' institute, but the fine subscription service of the Linenhall Library, founded a century before the public library started its service. This library had a fine stock, and its work was such that few people saw the need for municipal libraries. In Swindon there was no municipal service until 1943, the Public Libraries Acts having been adopted in the previous year. In this case it was the successful operation of the Great Western Railway Mechanics' Institution which deferred local-government action. Even in 1942, when the matter of adopting the Acts was mooted, the possibility of further delay caused by the Institution was only dispelled by the action of the Town Council, who resisted a suggestion by the Institution authorities to postpone until after the War any discussion of possible amalgamation of the Institution's library with that of the new municipal service.[4]

The mechanics' institutes gave no direct assistance to, and no arguments in favour of, the establishment of public libraries. On the contrary, the satisfactory and useful service provided by

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 2414 and 2443.

[2] *Cf.* Dobbs, A. E., *Education and Social Movements, 1700–1850* (1919), p. 185.

[3] Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates for the year 1849*, col. 849.

[4] Swift, J., in *Library Association Record* (October 1943), pp. 178–179.

their libraries and those of similar bodies, at modest cost to their patrons, ensured support for these institutions for a long time after such support might have gone more profitably to the public-library cause; and at the same time the sense of rivalry, conscious or otherwise, was preventing the mechanics' institutes from attaining the perfection hoped for by their pioneers.

Some stress has been laid on the fact that public libraries were not demanded and supported by the mass of the population, because this was to prove an important factor in their slow development; it was probably responsible for their neglect during the first seventy-five years of their existence and was certainly a deterrent to their progress.

And after a century and a quarter of the public library the question remains: although the library is respected by most of its users, although much lip-service is paid to its benefits, do local authorities in determining their priorities give any hint of strong public demand for the library; or would it be fair to suggest that in times of economic stress the library service is always an early candidate for financial restriction on its progress?

Returning to the nineteenth century, the adoption of the Library Act in Manchester provides an example of the procedure followed in the early years and serves as an indication of the part contributed by the working classes. The example of Manchester is chosen simply because it shows to best advantage the high motives of the promoters, drawn mainly from the upper classes, and the rather careless attitude of the lower classes; Manchester had a large enough working-class population to ensure that their view was heard had they wished it.

Soon after the passing of the 1850 Act several influential citizens of Manchester agreed to give support to the project for the establishment of a public library in that city. They then proceeded to buy a building and canvassed for subscriptions towards its conversion, equipment, and stocking with books. More than a year after these men had started their work on behalf of the library the matter was raised before the Town Council and later referred to a poll of the ratepayers. Of the 12,500 persons entitled to vote 4000 did; only 40 of these voted against the adoption of the Act.

The public approval of the library was expressed by this poll on August 20th, 1852. The library service was inaugurated on September 2nd, and the public were admitted four days later to a

stock of about 25,000 volumes. This scarcely suggests that the working classes played their part in the foundation of the library. Their feelings towards the matter were described by W. J. Paul, the secretary of a working-men's committee appointed to raise money from persons employed in warehouses, mills, factories, and workshops. He gave his report at the opening of the library and included in it these remarks: "The first meeting of this Committee was held at the Town Hall of Manchester, on Tuesday evening, the 11th of February, 1851, and at that time Subscriptions had been received by the General Committee from several Factories, Workshops, etc., amounting to about £35 0*s.* 0*d.*, and it was then evident that a considerable number of the Working Classes felt a deep and earnest Interest in the Establishment of the proposed Institution, fully convinced of its future success, and having no doubt of the Beneficial Influence it would exercise upon men of all Classes, especially upon the Artizans. But it was also apparent that comparatively little aid could be thus obtained unless some special organization was provided for the purpose of diffusing Information on the subject, and of Instituting an active canvas for donations. Hence the origin of the Working Man's Committee."[1] Paul thus suggested that the working classes, far from demanding the public library, needed the Committee to inform them of its value and benefits and to urge them to support it financially. He went on to give details of the collections of money made, and estimated that about 22,000 subscribers gave in all £814. (The population of Manchester at the time was over 300,000.)

Paul continued: "This being a brief Summary of the proceedings of the Working Men's committee, they would before drawing its history to a close express their most grateful and sincere thanks to the Chairman and the general Committee for the active and energetic Labour they have bestowed on the Institution; who not only have rendered an efficient Service by contributing their handsome donations along with other Gentlemen, but also shown how deeply they have sympathised in the elevation and refinement of the Working Classes by giving so much of their Valuable time and counsil [sic] towards the carrying out of this most desirable object . . ."[2] He admitted here the initiative of the general

[1] Credland, W. R., *The Manchester Public Free Libraries: A History and Description, and Guide to their Contents and Use* (1899), p. 17.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

committee, whose composition was wholly of persons outside the working classes, and which had been set up by a meeting at which Mr (later Sir) John Potter presided; among the speakers on this occasion were Dr Lee, the Bishop of Manchester, Dr Bowers, the Dean of Manchester, the Rev. John G. Robberds, Joseph Brotherton, M.P., Mr (later Sir) Thomas Bazley, and Dr Watts. Brotherton emphasized in his speech the necessity of educating the public who were now trying to gain power.

Sir John Potter also spoke at the opening of the library. He showed in his speech how much of the work of promoting its establishment had fallen to those men whose motives were purely philanthropic and whose aims were to help the lower classes. "The Committee of the Free Library have undoubtedly had a good and generous object in view in their labours. I can speak most positively to the effect that no personal objects, and no private motives have been attempted to be served in the establishment of this institution. We have been animated solely by the desire to benefit our poorer fellow-creatures."[1]

The history of Manchester Public Libraries showed also that many who had not supported the library movement in its earlier days had refrained simply because they did not appreciate the benefits it was to bring. In 1866, at the opening of the Hulme Branch, the Mayor, Alderman Bowker, said: "When first proposed, the value of Free Libraries was little understood. The public were afraid of them and looked upon them with jealousy."[2] And the Rev. George Bowden supported this point of view: "The governing power does not exist to carry out the whims of the people. It does so when it grants licenses to sell spirits to all who ask. But when it furnishes to the community a library for which there was no very loud demand, but which it saw would do the people good it was then in advance of their tastes; such an institution is an expression of enlightened thought."[3]

Thus from contemporary sources it can be shown that the Manchester Public Libraries were established by some enthusiastic members of the upper class who were guided in their work by a distinguished professional librarian, Edwards, and who put the matter to the test of public opinion only after the whole organiza-

[1] Credland, W. R., *The Manchester Public Free Libraries* (1899), p. 6.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

tion was ready for action; and those sources too mention with regret "the lukewarm feeling and very great coldness with which many of their fellow workmen have received" the library proposals.[1]

Since so little positive evidence of a demand for public libraries at that time appears to have existed, it may be profitable to examine the possible motives of the various sections of the community in the matter. What was the purpose of the public library for each of them?

The spirit of generosity and interest in the wellbeing of their less fortunate fellow-men was undoubtedly responsible for the sympathetic attitude of many members of the upper classes: a genuine kindness prompted them to use their wealth and influence in the provision of institutions to alleviate social problems. In libraries they saw a means of such improvement. There can be no argument that in Britain philanthropy was a major factor in the promotion of public libraries, and "viewed from the standpoint of later experience, the growth of philanthropy has a significance outweighing its intentions and its immediate results".[2]

Even in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where the workers' reputation for independence and self-help is well known, it is the mill-owners who are found repeatedly to have been the force behind the establishment of local libraries often directly associated with their factories.

In Halifax, for instance, Colonel Edward Akroyd established a library in 1850 in his workers' model village at Copley. Similarly the library operated in the Haley Hill area of Halifax was at Colonel Akroyd's instigation reorganized by the local headmaster in 1856. At that time it had a stock of 3000 books. Also in Halifax, the Crossley family in 1872 established the Dean Clough Institute and operated it for their workers on the lines of the mechanics' institutes. It included a lending library, a reference collection, and a reading-room which continued to function for thirty years.

Whether all the upper-class supporters of the library cause were quite so unselfish in their promotion of the movement may be questioned. The assistance and encouragement given to the mechanics' institutes by some employers were admitted by them to be business considerations: the progress of the institutes was

[1] Credland, W. R., *The Manchester Public Free Libraries* (1899), p. 19.
[2] Dobbs, A. E., *Education and Social Movements, 1700–1850* (1919), p. 7.

in some part a contribution to the success of the industry, which in turn profited the employer as well as the worker who used the institutes. Material prosperity was to some degree the motive of businessmen, and reference was made in the 1849 Public Libraries Report to the improvement in husbandry in some Scottish districts through the influence of the libraries in these areas.[1] Hole too spoke of the increased production as a result of the education of mechanics at the institutes.[2]

There was rampant at this period a notion, quite unsupported by fact but strengthened by traditional repetition, that education was synonymous with loss of power to do manual work—*e.g.*, the remarks of a Lincolnshire Justice of the Peace in 1807: "As to writing and arithmetic, it may be apprehended that such a degree of knowledge would produce in them a disrelish for the laborious occupations of life."[3] Fortunately the more astute industrialists saw this to be false. One of the major contributions to the public-library movement made by pre-1850 educational institutions lay in the help which they gave in destroying this misconception of intellectual improvement.

The wiser workman also saw the benefits of education. The tragedy of his position lay in the limited facilities: since so many of the lower classes received only the slightest acquaintance with education they could scarcely be expected to appreciate it. Social conditions were disgraceful; little incentive was offered to study, and the sad truth remained that it was in drunkenness that most of the labourers sought relief and escape from their uninteresting and brutalized lives.[4] Only a minority demanded library service for their self-improvement, and this they achieved by the establishment of the mechanics' institutes, supported by small purchases of the cheap books then available. They devised means to solve their own problem and accordingly had no need for the facilities of the municipal libraries.

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), p. 253.

[2] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 52.

[3] Dobbs, A. E., *Education and Social Movements, 1700–1850* (1919), p. 148.

[4] *Cf.* Cole, G. D. H., and Postgate, Raymond, *The Common People, 1746–1938* (1938). Miller, Hugh, *Essay on the Working Classes* (June 1854). Poor Law Commissioners, *Inquiry into the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (1842), *passim.*

The degradation of the common people provided a motive for the religious societies who strove to improve their condition of life. Such societies were either under the auspices of a church or were promoted by members of the upper classes who could afford to undertake such good work.

There was similar activity elsewhere in Europe. In France, for example, the Franklin Society had been established with the support of representatives and officials of the Government and other influential educational figures. The Society's main aim was to provide a public-library service for the working classes, and it flourished from 1862 until the beginning of the twentieth century, when, like so many of its counterparts throughout the world, it declined for lack of financial support. Again like its counterparts elsewhere, however, its influence was great enough to delay the establishment of a true public-library service.

American public libraries which were commencing their activities about the same time experienced similar philanthropy where "wealth had shown itself favourably disposed by erecting library buildings",[1] but had found a more ready general support. Though the intellectual motive was more emphatically asserted as the prime function of libraries in the United States, the social and moral aspects were also strongly presented.

The evidence of contemporary opinion suggests that the initiative in promoting public libraries came from the upper strata of society rather than from the working classes. It will be seen, however, that once the libraries were established they proved their value, and thus enlisted the support of all sections of the people.

[1] Ditzion, Sydney, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* (1947), p. 73. *Cf.* also Bostwick, Arthur E., *The American Public Library* (1923), p. 215.

3 *Development of Purpose in the Public-library Movement*

The early protagonists of public libraries were vague in their aims, being motivated mainly by a generosity towards the less-favoured sections of the community. It seemed unethical to them that library facilities were not universally available; it impressed them as a gap in the cultural structure of society. They saw it as a social duty that all should have free access to books and other means of enlightenment. It pleased them too that libraries might act as a counter-attraction to the enticement of strong drink and might serve to provide religious instruction and moral uplift. For many reasons, however, legislation and administration did not keep pace with their philanthropic enthusiasm, and the progress of public libraries was painfully slow. Not the least of these reasons were the variety of aims which were set for the libraries and the lack of sound professional guidance.

Crime, depravity, and destitution were common among the working people in the mid-nineteenth century, and did much to stimulate philanthropy.[1] It has been noted earlier that one argument constantly used in favour of free libraries was that which praised them as an alternative to evil, and, indeed, this can be said of the other social improvements being pressed at that time too. "Education was as much a means of restraint as of improvement. . . . The rescue-motive lay at the root of popular instruction."[2]

Some idea of the vagueness of the sponsors' motives can be judged from the fact that, even after libraries had been sanctioned for forty years, leaders in the profession could not determine what had induced the pioneers to support them. At the Second International Library Conference held in London in 1897 Henry R.

[1] *Cf.* Dobbs, A. E., *Education and Social Movements, 1700–1850* (1919), p. 152.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

Tedder expressed the view that "the free library movement in England was at the outset, educational. Ewart's first Bill . . . was an offshoot of the exertions on behalf of primary and secondary education."[1] But Mr (later Sir) J. Y. W. McAlister had just said: "It is significant that in the beginning libraries were sought for as a means of *recreation*, and the Bills expressly set this forth. The first libraries were wanted by readers who, having leisure, wanted to *read*, and knew what they wanted."[2]

The most certain evidence of their objectives is to be found in the utterances of the pioneers themselves. These prove conclusively the great diversity of purpose among them.

Foremost among their aims was moral improvement. The promotion of libraries by the religious societies was one manifestation of the hope that religion could be furthered by the provision of free libraries, and the statements of the Rev. J. C. Brown and other clerical witnesses before the 1849 Committee show that the interests of the churches and religion were the principal consideration weighing in favour of the libraries.

Since so much of the disorder of the times was attributed to the evil of strong drink, much of the appeal of the public library was attributed to its power to attract men away from the public-houses. There was a strong conviction that some of the power of gin-palaces and similar establishments was due to the absence of superior alternative occupation or entertainment. This accounts for the rise of so many organizations whose sole purpose was to prevent drunkenness. The most notable of these was, perhaps, the Working Men's Club. One writer had no doubt "that one reason why our country fell into such unusual intemperance was the want of simple innocent and authorized recreations in it".[3]

This purely moral aim was to stay in the minds of library administrators for many years.[4] In 1866 the Rev. James Gwyther, at the opening of the Hulme Branch of Manchester Public

[1] *Transactions and Proceedings of the Second International Library Conference held in London, July 13–16, 1897*, p. 17.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[3] Dewey, Rev. Orville, in Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 171.

[4] The efforts towards the mental and moral improvement of the working classes through adult education and especially the mechanics' institutes are described in J. F. C. Harrison's *Learning and Living 1790–1960* (1961), Chapter II.

Libraries, "hoped that many would be detached from these haunts where the indulgences only debase and degrade". And in the same year, at the opening of another Manchester branch, Edward James, Q.C., M.P., said: "The more they could divert the attention of the people of this country from the public-house, gin-shops, beer-shops, and places of that description, by opening such institutions as free libraries, and enable them to cultivate their minds, the more effectively would they diminish and put an end to the degrading vice of drunkenness, which now brought about so much misery, wretchedness, and crime."[1] Even Carnegie, who had a wide vision of the function of libraries in education and recreation, remembered this notion of substituting them for evil. "They never pauperize. A taste for reading drives out lower tastes."[2] Writing about the time of the first Carnegie library gifts, one writer suggested that the gin-palace haunter's "attention must be absorbed and a more interesting way of spending his time offered him in some other resort. News-rooms are, no doubt, the first step upwards for him."[3]

Even in twentieth-century Ireland the library was still being held up as a diversion from dissipation. "A library is not only the best auxiliary to the work of the school—so vitally important in modern Ireland—but one of the best counter-attractions to dissipation; nor will anyone who has gained through it a taste for good reading find country life dull. He will be taught, on the contrary, to realize that it has interests and opportunities quite as abundant and attractive as those of the city. He will also have what is so much needed in Ireland, a chance of studying the history, literature, and antiquities of his own country, and gaining a knowledge of her industrial resources. The most successful peoples in modern times are those among whom knowledge and thought are most widely diffused."[4]

More obvious than its use as a distraction from the public-houses was the library's substitution of good literature for bad. Pernicious literature was circulating in the mid-nineteenth century

[1] Credland, W. R., *The Manchester Public Free Libraries* (1899), pp. 69 and 84.

[2] Carnegie, Andrew, quoted on tablet at St Louis Public Library.

[3] Odell, W., in *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. xliii (1880–81), p. 440.

[4] Irish Rural Libraries Association, *The Organization of Rural Libraries in Ireland* (1904), p. 4.

in great profusion, much of it having its origin on the Continent. One witness before the 1849 Committee spoke of this "large circulation of translations of French novels among the reading classes of the working population of England" as being of a doubtful social and licentious character.[1] The rise of a socialist literature was causing concern among the employers of labour. The provision of public libraries was therefore supported by the persons who saw in them a potential method of restraining their workers from reading books then regarded as revolutionary and harmful.[2] It is strange that many supporting the libraries for this reason failed to see their opposing value of social equalization.

It was clear that advice alone was insufficient as a cure for the social and literary degradation among the working classes. No amount of condemnation or preaching served to destroy the attractions of their debased habits. The solution lay in providing an alternative so desirable as to be a permanent inducement from the unsavoury literature and leisure-time resorts of the masses.

How serious the substituted books were to be provided a problem. Many felt that the new public libraries should avoid fiction altogether, and that all their resources should be concentrated on the educational improvement of the workers. Others, remembering the experience of the mechanics' institutes, realized that the majority of readers could not make the change from frivolous trash to sound literature at one step and, in consequence, advocated the addition of a proportion of recreational books. Thus, by avoiding a complete suppression of light reading, they hoped to hold new readers who might otherwise have been driven back to less carefully selected stocks.[3] This same attitude can be recognized in many modern public libraries.

Charles Knight's work against obnoxious literature as the publisher to Lord Brougham's Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge is worthy of note here, not so much for its effect (as a financial proposition it was a failure), as for its demonstration of the principle which was actuating so many of the public-library pioneers—the elevation of moral levels through the improvement of literary provision.

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 2695.

[2] *Cf.* Ditzion, Sydney, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* (1947), p. 87.

[3] *Cf.* Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 28.

The efforts of the great humanitarians and educationists of the early and mid-nineteenth century could not have failed to influence the cause of public libraries. The amelioration of social conditions and the struggle for universal education were the most marked signs of the revolt against past failures and inadequacies. The library pioneers, many of them in the vanguard of the wider campaign, saw the need for books to help the working classes to maintain the standard which they hoped to accomplish, and, believing that social betterment of all classes was in the general interest of the whole community, they pressed for the free provision of these books.

However good their intentions were, these men were inevitably influenced by their upbringing and background. Many of them were drawn from the wealthy business class, and from their infancy had had the benefits of a private library in their homes. Ewart's father, for instance, was a merchant who had considerable commercial success in Liverpool, and among his uncles were a diplomat, a doctor, and an engineer, all men whose interests were such as encouraged the formation and development of private libraries. Brotherton's wide interests too were such as demanded a personal library of some size. Thus, in very many cases, the people who pressed the case for public libraries did so with the experience of their own personal libraries in mind. One lasting effect of this was the ignorance of library promoters and administrators, who did not fully realize the implications of the system which they wished to encourage, for, of course, their need to resort to the public libraries was diminished or removed by their own book-collections. This unawareness of the practical use of the libraries has been preserved in the persons of Members of Parliament and senior Civil Servants, for the same reason that hitherto they have been drawn from a class which owns private libraries or has access to non-public libraries and apparently has no need to use the public library. The result is, notwithstanding a gradual enlightenment by the new professional guidance in the Department of Education and Science, that legislators and many of their advisers still attempt to guide and improve a service of which they have a very limited working knowledge.

Another result of its foster-parentage was that the public library found itself burdened in its early days with an over-abundance of superannuated scholars as its librarians. It seemed fitting to the

sponsors that the persons to be put in charge of the new libraries should be well acquainted with literature, but unhappily they neglected the necessity for ensuring that the librarians should also have been alert and businesslike, modern in outlook and acquainted with the widest needs of the public and aware of the trends of advancing knowledge and thought in all the strata of the community. Thus, often the library administration fell into the hands of men whose interests were perhaps scholarly, but were such as precluded a full realization of the function of the new service and prevented its development towards that end. As Bertrand Russell has said: "Men who live in an academic milieu tend to be unaware of the pre-occupations and problems of ordinary men and women."[1]

Far too often the public library was guided by people who failed to realize that its functions were at once wider and more definite than the vague objectives set out by its early sponsors, and only when the person appointed was drawn from the professional librarian class, as in the case of Edward Edwards, could there have been any hope of good progress.

Sir J. Y. W. MacAlister, perhaps the most vitalizing character in the public library's first century, presented this case formidably at the 1887 Library Association Conference at Birmingham with his humorous but arresting paper, 'Wanted—a Librarian', and again at the Second International Library Conference in 1897. But the misfits of whom he spoke then have persisted. "With a few brilliant exceptions of the type of Panizzi, combining scholarship and business capacity and organizing power, which are the three essentials of good librarianship, the average librarian of sixty years ago was one of two kinds, both utterly unfitted for present-day needs.

"The best was a scholar—narrow, probably, and pedantic, but still a scholar—generally of the type that absorbs and gives nothing back . . . happy in his surroundings, which he regarded as specially designed for his comfort, and [he] keenly resented the impertinence of any rash reader who dared to suggest that he too had his rights.

"The other type is still familiar to many of us: the superior servant past his work but fond of reading, or the old sergeant who had charge of the regimental library, consisting of fifty-odd novels

[1] Russell, Bertrand, *In Praise of Idleness* (1935), p. 27.

and an old army list—these are still provided for at the expense of a long-suffering community by the selfish so-called generosity of their friends, who possess local influence."[1]

Lady John Manners, in her *Encouraging Experiences of Free Libraries, Reading and Recreation Rooms*, obviously drew some inspiration for her book from the cases which she cited, and these unhappily reflect misguided enthusiasm for just those characteristics which contribute least to librarianship. The rural librarian at Edmundthorpe, for example, "opens a reading-room free three times per week. She provides newspapers, some books, and games for men; she makes a great point of having a good fire always for them, and three lamps; and she gives them coffee, biscuits, tobacco, occasionally apples, and sometimes peppermint-drops." And Mrs John Welby at Allinton "has studied the men's comfort in every way, and has provided cushions for the seats. The men find the cushions delightfully comfortable after their day's work."[2] It is inconceivable that these librarians could ever have been put in charge of a municipal public library, but the attitude of the writer to their work brings out the consistent neglect in her arguments to press the important aspects of the truly public libraries, and emphasizes her misdirected zeal for the purely material benefits which could equally have been provided in other, more suitable ways. In her earlier book on this subject, *Some of the Advantages of Easily Accessible Reading and Recreation Rooms and Free Libraries*, she again proved that the library part of the service was the least of her concerns. Describing the Birnam Reading-room, when incidentally she stressed the value of a bar for non-alcoholic drinks, she chose this incident as of special interest. "Over the mantel-piece is a print of her Majesty reviewing the volunteers in Edinburgh. One day some volunteers came in, and were at once attracted by the picture. Their delight in pointing out to each other her Majesty's figure was great; and they expressed much pleasure in seeing a variety of newspapers arranged on the tables."[3]

While many of the public library's advocates were concerned with the broadest moral and social benefits, some tended to press their own special motives with almost fanatical vigour. Lady John

[1] *Transactions and Proceedings of the Second International Library Conference held in London, July 13–16, 1897*, p. 9.

[2] *Op. cit.* (1886), pp. 4 and 7.

[3] *Op. cit.* (1885), p. 11.

Manners, quoted above, was one such enthusiast, and her two small books and several articles on the advantages of libraries suggest that she never seemed to be aware of, or was unconcerned with, the significance of the great public-library movement which was around her, for she consistently advocated the setting up of local libraries on a scale which condemned them to failure almost instantly. She did not realize that libraries on that basis would come to nought in the same way as the previous similar schemes had come to frustration—for want of money and energetic support. For instance, she advised the formation of libraries for domestic servants, to be established in large houses by the employers. She referred only rarely to free libraries, and on such occasions did not press for municipal support, but praised the subscription or private libraries almost exclusively. One example was when "a good many years ago, the late Mr Thomas Sopwith, manager of the lead mines, St John, started a free library for the miners. They paid an almost nominal subscription."[1] Her books leave the impression that the provision of a library service is an investment for employers, and that it does not matter what benefits are derived by the readers so long as they are kept out of mischief.

The power of single individuals to affect public-library service was not, however, so marked as in America, where personal objects were quite blatantly sought by persons whose financial position qualified them to provide libraries for the communities who accepted them. George Peabody and Gerrit Smith, for example, when donating a library in the United States usually laid down their own censorship of the material to be available in the library of their beneficiaries.[2]

In Britain no single group of sponsors pressed their object with more effect than the religious bodies. Wherever libraries had been founded before 1850 by such societies, or under the patronage of a church, they were primarily, and quite avowedly so, religious in outlook and intention. Even where the libraries were provided for general use by the public the majority of the books were on religion and philosophy, with the result that other subjects were neglected. It is not surprising that the views engendered by the study of such libraries tended towards bigotry rather than toleration, to a narrow encompassment of knowledge than to width of vision. In

[1] *Op. cit.* (1885), p. 30.
[2] *Cf.* Ditzion, Sydney, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* (1947), p. 60.

consequence of this limited tradition, when public libraries were supported by religious organizations, the influence exerted by these bodies was still to be felt.

This phenomenon was not exclusive to this country. In Holland about the middle of the nineteenth century many Protestant popular libraries were established, and although some are now fully recognized public libraries their original objectives are still preserved in rules which lay down a clearly religious basis.

Similarly in Germany at the same time, the establishment of parish libraries was proceeding under the sponsorship of Borromäusverein, a Catholic society which is still an important part of the German library scene. In some cases there have been amalgamations of the Borromäus library and the local public library, but the denominational influence naturally remains. Both in Germany and in Holland the existence of popular libraries run by such organizations had the same deterrent effect on public libraries operated under local-authority or state supervision as did the mechanics' institutes in Britain and the Franklin Society in France.

Fortunately, the most important original individual sponsors of the library movement in Britain were men of high integrity, who sought to improve the education and social condition of the people as a whole, who did not seek to press any partisan advantage as a by-product of their work for public libraries. Ewart, for instance, declared: "I have ever felt it to be my duty to look to the interest of the *whole*—not of a part; not to ask what course is conducive to the advantage of a class, but to search for and follow that line of conduct which is conducive to the interests of the nation."[1] And by his actions Ewart proved the honesty of his expressed purpose.

While the vague indetermination and misguided zeal of many British public-library advocates were retarding the progress of the movement here, the objectives of the libraries were being much more surely stated and practised in the United States. The desire to set out the purpose of their libraries was shown in the preamble to the Massachusetts Library Bill: "Whereas a universal diffusion of knowledge among the people must be highly conducive to the preservation of their freedom, a greater equalization of their social

[1] Ewart, William, Address to the Electors of the Dumfries Burghs, December 1839, in *Dumfries and Galloway Courier*, December 25th, 1839.

advantages, their industrial success, and their physical, intellectual and moral advancement and elevation: and

"Whereas it is requisite to such a diffusion of knowledge, that while sufficient means of a good early education shall be furnished to all the children in the Common Schools, ample and increasing sources of useful and interesting information should be provided for the whole people in the subsequent and much more capable and valuable periods of life: and

"Whereas, there is no way in which this can be done so effectively, conveniently and economically as by the formation, increase and perpetuation of Public Libraries, in the several cities and towns of this Commonwealth, for the use and benefit of all their respective inhabitants:—Be it enacted. . . ."[1]

American educational facilities of this period were more freely and universally available, and there was a much-felt need to destroy the possibility of class conflict. As a result, much effort was being applied to the extension of the educational service where it seemed weakest—among the adults. The use of libraries as educational institutions was obvious, and their provision a logical consequence. The reports of the Boston Public Library, in its earliest years especially, made many references to providing means of education beyond the first stages, and to its being supplementary to the schools and an instrument of higher education. The mid-nineteenth century saw an increasing consciousness among the Americans of the need for intellectual standing among the nations if the United States was to take a leading place in the world; this cultural awareness may have stimulated a feeling of rivalry with Europe and contributed to the support of their educational schemes. Great Britain, on the other hand, was rising quickly to the leadership of the world in commerce, and the cultural aspects so important to the United States were inclined to be regarded in this country as of minor consequence.

Logically, universal education should have preceded the provision of public libraries in this country. The immediate rise to appropriate significance by the libraries may well have been prevented by the inversion of this logical order. Again there is the

[1] Commonwealth of Massachusetts: an Act to Authorize, Encourage, and Ensure the Formation, Increase and Perpetuation of Public Libraries, etc. ('House No. 124' of 1851), pp. 1–2.

contrast with American experience. The clamant need for universal education there, for a large immigrant population and for the conversion of her economy from agriculture to industry, had given such an impetus to the cultural campaigns that when public libraries were proposed the American mind was prepared for them. On the contrary, in Britain when the libraries were advocated their protagonists had first to break down the traditional barriers, which either were non-existent in America, or had been laid low by their educationists earlier. It is interesting nevertheless to note that in modern conditions, in Britain as well as elsewhere, great efforts are made on behalf of immigrant populations, not only to encourage a continuing interest in their native literature but also to ease their integration into the new environment.

In many countries today the levels of literacy are equivalent to British standards of more than a century ago, and in such places the public library has assumed an indispensable role in education and utilizes not only reading materials but organizes exhibitions and lectures and supports its efforts with modern audio-visual aids.

Three years after the first Public Libraries Act in England Hole expressed the view that "all the aid that the Government can lend to adult education is to afford it opportunities. This is done in part by the plan of public libraries and museums, which, however, have scarcely begun to be established nationally."[1] At this time there were 700 mechanics' institutes with a membership of 120,000. The issues from the institute libraries exceeded 2,000,000 volumes.[2] Hole's conclusion, after studying the educational facilities offered by the mechanics' institutes, was that the library was next in importance to the personal tuition of a teacher.

Despite the fine record of the mechanics' institutes, Hole was by no means satisfied, for he was convinced that deficient elementary education was rendering the institutes less effective than they need have been. He had good grounds for this belief.

William J. Fox, M.P., speaking on the Bill for compulsory education which he introduced in the Commons in 1850, said that nearly one-third of all the men and nearly half of the women married were unable to sign their names in the register. He went

[1] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 98.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 9 and 10.

on to show that more than one-third of juvenile offenders were unable to read, and concluded that, "whatever returns were made from the schools, the number of persons instructed was much smaller than could be supposed".[1] Another Member, C. Anstey, on the same subject, said that in Liverpool earlier returns showed one person in eight as having had some education, but that recent returns in comparing the educated and uneducated showed a proportion of one in ten.[2]

Though universal education became compulsory for children only, much was happening in the political field to ensure a wider demand for education among adults too. The increased political responsibility granted under the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 gave rise to an inquiring attitude towards the political issues at stake and served to encourage study among older people. (It will be remembered, of course, that while the Acts had extended the franchise to the working-men in both town and country they had still excluded women from the vote.) Responsible political action is cyclic: it is derived from an educated population, and in turn increases the education of the people through an appreciation of their responsibilities. John Stuart Mill, in pressing the case for representative government, regarded an ability to read, write, and count as necessary for anyone who was to be allowed to vote for his own government. He emphasized too that "universal teaching must precede universal enfranchisement".[3] Thus, the provision of public libraries should have logically enjoyed the support of the new electors as offering a ready means towards the instruction which would have more fully qualified them in the exercise of their vote, and which so many of them had been denied.

At the opening of the Openshaw Branch Library in Manchester in 1894 Chancellor Christie stressed the value of the library in this field: "The extension of the franchise, by which the decision of all important political questions was now vested in the bulk of the people, rendered it more than ever necessary that every elector should possess a knowledge of past history."[4] The fact that

[1] House of Commons: Parliamentary Debates ('Hansard'), vol. cxi (1850), col. 783–784.

[2] *Ibid.*, col. 758–759.

[3] Mill, John Stuart, *Representative Government* (1865), Chapter 8, pp. 66–76.

[4] Credland, W. R., *The Manchester Public Free Libraries* (1899), p. 209.

libraries were not used more effectively to gain that knowledge may be attributed to the existence of other organizations which had deliberately political or sectarian aims, seeking almost exclusively the political maturity of their members.

Employers of labour had perhaps been frightened by the unrest among the working classes in the early half of the century, and were not then sympathetic to great educational schemes. What they might have realized was that the greatest threat to stable government came from masses of ignorant people who could have been easily led, or misled, by agitators. The provision of education through libraries could have done much unobtrusively to remove that threat, and those in authority should have been much readier to press the libraries' cause as potential instruments for the moulding of the single thoughts which together constitute the political opinion of the nation.

Brotherton was among the few who realized this significant feature, and at a meeting to promote the foundation of the Manchester Public Libraries he said that "the wealthy required a better education as well as the masses of the community; they required to be taught what the people think, what is really their best interest, and . . . the wealthy of this neighbourhood had no stronger interest than in endeavouring to cultivate the minds of the great masses of the people".[1]

Some impetus might have been expected to the founding of new public libraries and to the use of existing ones from the passing of the Education Act of 1870, but this Act and succeeding ones were slow to take effect. Accordingly, it is difficult to assess their effect with any accuracy, except insofar as they made reading an almost universal faculty. Whether the library-user would have been a reader without the new educational service is doubtful, but in the face of so much reading prior to 1870 it seems fair to presume that anyone with the desire to use the libraries would have found means of learning the mechanics of reading in order to have its benefits now so freely offered in the public libraries. And, in view of the constantly widening syllabus of instruction in schools, it is not beyond argument that skill in reading has suffered in proportion to the broadening of their educational scope.

After 1870 public-library progress remained slow. This, of course, is partly attributable to the antagonism of many supporters

[1] Credland, W. R., *The Manchester Public Free Libraries* (1899), p. 3.

of private educational services. "The Education Act of 1870, which was looked upon as the Abolition of Ignorance, has failed to achieve its object; it has left darkness grosser by the revolt of those educated under compulsion."[1] So wrote one such critic, the Rev. Freeman Wills, who was an advocate of the "recreation evening schools" which combined study with songs, gymnastics, rambles, and games, but who never considered the value of public libraries to his work.

One writer in 1886 complained that the "chief difficulty about literature for the working classes is to reach them. . . . It is a matter for regret that, with many means of disseminating among them the masterpieces of the English language, more energy is not exerted in bringing home to them the inherent attractions of Shakespeare, Scott, Marryat, Dickens, Lytton, Eliot. . . . Without underrating their beneficial action, it may safely be said that free libraries have not done all that was expected of them in the way of bringing the literary gems of the world within the reach of the sons of toil. The elementary education now received by every child at least gives him a power of reading not always possessed by his fathers, but such power is not necessarily employed. He might read more if books were brought to his home. Between the free library and his home, morally and materially stands the public house. Taking cognisance of the working classes as a whole, there is one thing which I believe to be indisputable—*viz.*, that the instruction imparted through the Board School has not super-induced any large amount of reading, except in a shape contemptible and worthless."[2]

Peter Cowell, librarian of Liverpool Public Libraries, held the view that "elementary and other schools have undoubtedly raised the level of general education, but, except in the direction of the scientific and literary magazines and reviews, the statistics of public libraries did not indicate this fact".[3]

The Rev. Freeman Wills was equally sure that elementary education did not increase the reading of good books. "The fact confronts us that much of the thirteen millions spent annually on

[1] In *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. xx (1886), p. 133.

[2] Salmon, Edward G., 'What the Working Classes read', in *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. xx (1886), pp. 116–117.

[3] *Transactions and Proceedings of the Second International Library Conference held in London, July 13–16, 1897*, p. 100.

elementary education is barren of results of real value, owing to education coming to a dead stop for almost all the children at the age of twelve or thirteen. At that age a child had just mastered the mechanical acquirement of the arts of reading, writing and arithmetic; it has been entrusted with the keys of knowledge, but does not enter in; it has arrived at the starting point of education, and there it stops—that is to say, education ends where it ought to begin. . . . Nearly half a million of children leave school every year and only about five per cent, it is calculated, pursue their education in any way from the point where it is dropped."

After school, he continued, "the labours of life begin; and ten hours in a factory tax the children's physical powers to the utmost. There is no appetite for books when the crowd of fagged boys escapes from the long daily bondage, or the girls cramped up at their work so many hours, get out into the streets."

"True, there is a literature specially provided for the vast amount of our raw material flung out of our schools ready for manufacture," but "instead of teaching anything of sterling worth, this literature depraves and warps the ideas of youths, and makes them long for highly spiced criminal excitements."[1] And still Wills did not see how readily the public libraries could have solved these problems.

Considering the value of distributing books of technical value, Odell wrote: "Free libraries are so cheap a way of doing all this and much more, that the slowness of the progress of the movement is the most astounding part of its history. . . . One reason, no doubt, of this slowness is the feeling that it is a sort of compulsory charity; that the rich man is taxed for the sake of teaching the poor matters which some of their masters and mistresses think they are none the better for knowing."[2]

On the same page Odell wrote of the adoption of the Public Libraries Act in Coventry, and referred to the "small but enthusiastic" meeting which was responsible. But in the first three years of its life Coventry Public Library had no money to buy books. This provides yet another example of the enthusiastic minority, who, quite rightly, were anxious to press the cause of the

[1] Wills, Rev. Freeman, in *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. xx (1886), pp. 131–132.

[2] Odell, W., in *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. xliii (1880–81), pp. 441 and 443.

libraries, but who were obstructed by the majority, who were not prepared to pay for the value of the service.

Some improvement in the progress of the libraries might have been expected from the professional association of librarians just founded. Following the first International Conference of Librarians in London in October 1877 the Library Association of the United Kingdom was formed with, among other things, the following professed objects:

"To promote the establishment of New Libraries;
to endeavour to secure better legislation for Public Libraries;
to unite all persons engaged or interested in library work for the purpose of promoting the best administration of Libraries and to encourage bibliographical research."[1]

But the hopes of the Association's founders were not altogether realized. Such a body could do little in the establishment of new libraries without the full co-operation and goodwill of local authorities, and though the number of adoptions of the Acts rose sharply in the early years of the Association, this was due to the benevolence of Andrew Carnegie rather than to any action of the Association.

There were many endeavours to improve the library legislation, but many factors, including dissension within the Association, prevented their fulfilment. It has been suggested by Wellard[2] that libraries had many friends in Parliament, and he gives the multiplicity of the Acts passed concerning libraries as proof. This may be true, but the ineffectiveness of these Acts to ensure a sound and uniform library service must be judged as an indication that, however strong and well-intentioned these parliamentary friends may have been, they had not been advised of the importance and potential significance of this new service about which they legislated.

Characteristic of the Library Association's frustration was the campaign for the removal of the library rate limitation of a penny in the pound. The earliest paper on this subject was read by W. E. A. Axon in 1881, and from that time onward the Association was constantly alert to any opening which might have led to the removal of the limitation. Nevertheless, in England the rate limit

[1] Preamble to the Royal Charter and Bye-laws of the Library Association (1898).

[2] Wellard, James, *Book Selection* (1937), pp. 36–37.

remained for the best part of forty years, in Northern Ireland for sixty-five years, and in Scotland for more than seventy years.

In its efforts to unite library workers the Association was more successful, but this did not contribute materially to the progress of library service where the local authorities had not adopted the Acts, and while the services which did exist were hampered in their development by rate limitation and other out-of-date legislation.

The local authorities were slow to adopt the Acts, thus denying the eagerness which so often was protested by enthusiastic sponsors. Less than one hundred authorities had adopted the Acts at the foundation of the Library Association in 1877, and those which did establish libraries often pursued so niggardly a policy, by choice or compulsion of the rate limitation, that the libraries never had a chance to flourish. They suffered from all the symptoms of the pre-public libraries, and languished in their weaknesses.

Thus for the first thirty years after the passing of the original Act the progress of library provision was dependent on local enthusiasm, and in many cases even this was conditioned by the existence of alternative means of having what appeared to be the same service. Whatever significance the public libraries had was bound to be local, and, since the number of authorities operating the Acts in 1880 was so small, there could then be little claim to anything approaching national effect and importance.

The year 1880 has a particular significance for British, and American, public libraries, for it was in this year that the Scottish town of Dunfermline adopted the Library Acts as the direct result of an offer by a native, Andrew Carnegie, a few years before, to bear the cost of erecting and equipping a library for that town. When, in 1881, Carnegie's mother laid the foundation stone of the Dunfermline Public Library building she could scarcely have realized that she was in fact laying the foundation of the public-library movement as it flourishes now. The Dunfermline Library was the first of some 2600 which Carnegie gave to authorities throughout the English-speaking world. It is fair to assume that without his benevolence the foundation of public libraries would have been much retarded.

An indication of Carnegie's influence can be found in the number of authorities who adopted the Acts before and during the period of his gifts. In 1883, when Dunfermline Library opened, some 140 towns in Britain had decided to have public libraries.

By 1899 this number had risen to 393, the majority of the adoptions being due to Carnegie grants.

Though his gifts far outnumbered those of any other donor, Carnegie was not alone in this benevolence towards libraries, and the years 1880–1900 saw many other benefactors making generous contributions to the movement. These included Taylor and Winnard of Wigan, Keiller of Dundee, Coats of Paisley, Gilstrap of Newark, Harris at Preston, Ferris in Cornwall, and Passmore Edwards in London and in the West Country.

In view of the failure of earlier libraries which were founded as the result of private benefaction, and since Carnegie's gifts exerted the greatest influence in the period under review, it is worth considering the difference between the conditions under which the various gifts were made. The difference was just that which Edward Edwards had so emphatically stressed in his *Memoirs.*[1] The libraries needed some assured means of support. In the earlier cases the libraries had been founded by the generosity of some donor whose own enthusiasm and guidance served to maintain the service during his lifetime and whose influence often infected his successors with similar magnanimity. The result was that the libraries continued as long as there was some patron, but failed whenever the flush of enthusiasm passed. Carnegie, on the other hand, ensured a future for his library gifts. His own view on the matter was: "No millionaire will go far wrong in his search for one of the best forms for the use of his surplus who chooses to establish a free library in any community *that is willing to maintain*[2] and develop it."[3] His practice was to offer his gift, usually of the building for the library, on condition that the town receiving it guaranteed an annual expenditure on it of about a tenth of the original cost. Not only was his gift preserved, but an interest was aroused in it by the fact that public expenditure was involved too.

Carnegie may easily have found the inspiration for this method in an answer given before the 1849 Committee by the Rev. H. Mackenzie, of St Martin-in-the-Fields, who gave his view: "I think that if they were merely told, 'There is a library there, you may go and get books when you like,' there would be very few comparatively who would avail themselves of it. But if it were

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 775, quoted in Chapter 2 of this book.
[2] The italics are mine.
[3] Carnegie, Andrew, *The Gospel of Wealth* (1901), pp. 30–31.

brought before them as a thing in which they were to take a part, and they had some sort of vested right in it, then they would take a much greater interest in it, and I think appreciate what was done more, when they felt that they had a personal interest in it."[1]

It would be false to allow an impression to be created that this public interest was always sympathetic to Carnegie's offer of a library, however. Indeed, many attempts were made in various towns to prevent the acceptance of Carnegie gifts—for a multitude of reasons, some political and others based on sound knowledge of local financial conditions and needs. In America particularly, the political element prevailed, working-class communities in some cases resenting the methods adopted towards his workers in the steelworks from which his fortune had been derived. In Britain this motive for opposing the gifts existed too, but to a much less degree. In this country opposition was often too late in coming, and small towns found themselves burdened with the upkeep of a library larger than the community required and at a cost greater than could reasonably have been expected from the income of such a town. But these unfortunate cases, however common, were in the minority, and the effect of Carnegie's gifts where properly administered and financed was such as to overshadow any apparent failures.

Meanwhile, even enlightened opinion still showed no great interest in public libraries. Half the towns and the whole of the rural areas were without public-library service, so that this is not surprising. Until 1883 Westminster was the only part of London in which the Acts had been adopted, this having been done by the parish vestry of St Margaret and St John in 1856.

The non-democratic origin of the public-library movement persisted as a brake on its progress. The value of the libraries to all classes of people was appreciated by such pioneers as Brotherton, but to few influential persons outside the hard core of original sponsors. The result of this was that many regarded the public library as the monopoly of the poor, and did not use it. This tendency to think of libraries as 'free', as charitable institutions for the poverty-stricken, was long-lived, but is now happily almost gone. The Victorian attitude to the acceptance of charity ensured that anyone who could afford to use the subscription libraries continued to do so.

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 2093.

Prominent speakers on the new service did little to rid the people's minds of this notion. Lord Lytton, at the opening of the Manchester Public Libraries, said: "You have voluntarily contributed to diffuse amongst the poor the means of intellectual wealth. I confess, however, that there are two things which I value still more than this library itself: and the one is, the generous spirit of emulation with which the poor have co-operated with you for their own improvement; and next, the proof you have given that you sympathize with all that can elevate and instruct the classes whose industries you employ."[1] And Charles Dickens spoke on the same occasion of the library as "a great free school, bent on carrying instruction to the poorest hearths".[2]

Odell commented on the existence of this mistaken notion, and was one of the few writers who tried to correct it. "It is a mistake for the well-to-do classes to think that a free library should be treated like a charitable institution, and left for the use of the poor only. It is paid for by owners of property, and by using it freely they get, to say the least of it, a fair return for their money, besides securing to the public generally many advantages which no charity could confer."[3]

Apart from preventing the wider use of the libraries, this misconception of their functions created opposition on the grounds that the poor were not socially responsible. There was talk of the great losses there would be among the books from theft and careless treatment—and this was before the days of universal open access to the shelves! However true it may have been that the Victorian working classes were irresponsible, it would appear now that this argument was somewhat tenuous when books of small value were involved. Had the public libraries set out to collect ancient manuscripts of great worth and then proposed lending them, some substance might have been lent to the argument, but their stocks were built up mainly from current literature, the loss of which could easily have been repaired.

Where some interest had been stirred in the movement it was often a mere repetition of the pioneers' opinions, a reiteration of their indecisive attitude to the purpose and effect of the public library, or a specious expedition into community morality. An

[1] Ogle, John J., *The Free Library* (1897), p. 29.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[3] Odell, W., in *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. xliii (1880–81), p. 442.

example of the last is given by Odell, writing on the working of the libraries in 1880.

"To one looking earnestly around him upon the conditions of human life, it would seem as if nine-tenths of the misery and crime of England were the fruit of two habits of its people—Improvidence, showing itself most mischievously in early marriages contracted before the bread-winner has saved enough to meet the necessity of a single year's illness or depression of trade, and adding largely to the number of mouths to be fed, whether trade is good or bad; and Intemperance, taking the bread out of those hungry mouths and leading, both directly to crime in moments of madness, and indirectly through the loss of character and the misery which is its almost invariable consequence.

"Far from showing *malice prepense*, these evils are both rather indicative of feelings of good fellowship and domestic affection, which only require moderating and guiding by a wider knowledge; and their cause will be easily distinguished as misemployed time and energy. And the means to counteract the mischief is to be found in supplying pursuits, in attracting and employing the energies and time thus misspent, and in guiding them into other channels, which will lead to good instead of evil."[1]

Even Credland, a professional librarian, had not forgotten the well-worn moral aspect, and in answering his own question: "What does the foundation and spontaneous growth of the public-library movement prove or imply?" he considered it "difficult to appraise the value of an undertaking of which the effects are mainly moral and the results are not immediately apparent".[2] This is all the more surprising when it is recalled that Credland quoted several authorities on the wider effects and value of the library.

One of the best estimates, and perhaps the most complete record, of public libraries in the nineteenth century came from Thomas Greenwood, whose book *Free Public Libraries* first appeared in 1886. Greenwood set out to provide a "history of the movement and a manual for the organization and management of rate-supported libraries", but he could not avoid instilling into it some of his missionary spirit which became the predominant

[1] Odell, W., in *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. xliii (1880–81), p. 439.

[2] Credland, W. R., *The Manchester Public Free Libraries* (1889), p. 219.

feature of it. He had been an assistant in Sheffield Library, but had given up this work to become a publisher and writer on the public-library movement. His zeal for the promotion of new libraries may be judged from the existence in the third edition of his book (mentioned above) of no less than three "latest items". Incorporated in the text is the first. The second is inserted as an addendum at the beginning, and the third takes the form of an insert; all carry the news of the latest progress in the adoption of the Acts.

The value of Greenwood's book in the present study lies in the completeness of its information. No such book had ever been previously published on public-library progress, Edwards's works having been aimed rather at the basic principle that the libraries were needed in this country. Greenwood offers evidence in the attempt to determine public reaction to the campaign for the libraries; at the same time he helps to determine the objects of contemporary librarianship.

"It may with safety be said that there is no modern movement which has made such rapid progress as has the Public Library Movement. Only a very few years ago the leaders of public instruction had to lament that so few districts had availed themselves of the Public Libraries Acts, and voluntarily taxed themselves for the support of an institution, which should be the common property of the people, and the home of the productions of the great minds of past and present periods. In 1879 the number of Public Libraries was only eighty-seven, being the total for the forty years from the Museum Act passed in 1839, or an average of two districts per annum. After an interval of thirty-six years from the passing of the Ewart Act of 1850 only 133 districts had enrolled themselves as users of 'the nimble penny', but now the total number stands at just over 200, making an addition of no fewer than seventy in four years."[1] Reasons have already been given for the phenomenal rise in the four years recorded by Greenwood, who did, nevertheless, emphasize the slow start and the opposition which persisted.

"Notwithstanding the change which has come over public opinion with regard to these institutions, there is yet a mountain of work to be done, and our appeal is to all in towns and rural districts who care for the welfare of the community among which

[1] Greenwood, Thomas, *Public Libraries* (third edition, 1890), p. 1.

they dwell, to agitate and discuss the advisability as to the formation of these institutions where they are not already established. . . . The next generation will look back with astonishment at the prolonged opposition, coming sometimes from sources the least expected, with which the proposal to found these libraries has been met in certain centres usually regarded as enlightened."[1]

Despite his use of it in his arguments, Greenwood took a saner view than many of his contemporaries on the moral aspect of the libraries. "Too much, perhaps, is made of the Puritanical argument that a taste for literature keeps a man away from the pot-house. The bane of luxury lies not in moderate indulgence, but in excess. Time, and health, and mental energy may be wrongfully frittered away in reading as well as in tippling. But a temperate gratification of one pleasure is the strongest of all checks to excessive indulgence in another."[2]

An answer was given by Greenwood to the "pardonable fear that a Public Library would be the ruin of the mechanics' or kindred institutions. All who know anything of these institutions would be prepared to acknowledge that in times past they have done a most admirable work, but it may very seriously be doubted whether they are equal to the needs of the day. They are too exclusive in character, being proprietary institutions. They are, again, too costly to the average man, for there are few of them where the subscription is less than 5*s.* per year, and a working man would need to be rated at £60 a year to pay this amount in his rates, and even in the case of a £60 rateable value, there is better value in a Public Library than in the mechanics'. The libraries in many mechanics' institutes are poverty itself. New literature is conspicuous by its absence and in not a few towns they are languishing and gradually dying for want of funds. They lack the one vital principle which keeps Public Libraries healthy and vigorous, inasmuch as they are not subject to the control of the popular vote, and are, moreover, too much under the administration of cliques. In some towns they exist side by side with Public Libraries, and the twin institutions are in no sense antagonistic to each other. In other places the committee of the management have well and wisely offered to hand over their institution as a Public Library, if the town will adopt the Acts. This has been followed

[1] Greenwood, Thomas, *Public Libraries* (third edition, 1890), p. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

with the most satisfactory results, and is well worthy of being imitated in other towns. Certainly no mechanics' institute committee can reasonably expect a town to forego adopting the Acts simply because their institution might suffer."[1] Unfortunately, members of mechanics' institutes were not all prepared to consider the wider welfare of the community, and were primarily concerned with the maintenance of their institutes, with the result that public-library service was regarded as a competitor, and was opposed.

At the same time there must be some sympathy for libraries with up to half a century's experience behind them, and who were being asked to abandon their facilities in favour of an untried new local service. Much later the Secretary of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust was to express just this sympathy in his negotiations for the transfer of the Yorkshire Village Libraries resources to the new county libraries. "It is the usual case of the gallant voluntary body which has shown the way and struggled up the hill being superseded by public bodies established by a law which in part owes its very inception to the lessons taught by the pioneer institution."[2]

In the appendices to his book Greenwood gave the views of some leading public figures on the value of public libraries, and the opinions of some librarians on how to popularize the service which they provided. While it is obvious that there was general agreement on the value of the libraries' work it is certain that there was still much to be done before a satisfactory state of affairs could be attained. J. J. Ogle thought there was a need to spread a "broader and higher ideal of the functions of a Public Library".[3] Lord Iddesleigh was encouraged by everything he had seen of the libraries "except the smallness of their number".[4]

Though proud of the accomplishment of public libraries up to his own time, Greenwood saw too that they were by no means near to the fulfilment of their whole purpose. "The future historian writing upon the present decade will be compelled to take into

[1] Greenwood, Thomas, *Public Libraries* (third edition, 1890), pp. 28–29.

[2] Mitchell, Lieut.-Colonel J. M., in a letter to Professor John Strong, 1921.

[3] Greenwood, Thomas, *Public Libraries* (third edition, 1890), p. 528.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 519.

account the part which Public Libraries are taking in the education of the people. And it is safe to prophesy that at the rate of progress which is being made, the historian dealing with the first part of the twentieth century will acknowledge these citizens' institutions as occupying a very first place in the nation's life."[1] "What remains to be accomplished is vast, and as widely scattered as are the counties and shires of the whole United Kingdom and Ireland . . . This is deplorable."[2]

Although Scotland had a fine record of adoptions of the Public Libraries Acts, and despite Carnegie's special generosity towards his native land, John Mackintosh, a Scottish social historian writing in 1896, could only claim that there was no doubt that the public libraries "*will*[3] prove a source of enjoyment and benefit to the people, by placing within the reach of every citizen the means of becoming acquainted with the thoughts and sentiments of the great minds of the past and present". This was in spite of his claim that "the organisation and management of those libraries have already attained a remarkable degree of completeness, and much intelligence and skill have been brought to bear in forming the reference departments",[4] which suggests that the libraries, though good, were not yet making their impact felt.

Earlier Mackintosh had written that "in connection with research, science, philosophy, art, and culture, libraries are indispensible [*sic*]",[5] but, in listing the important libraries of Scotland, devoted most of his attention to those of a non-public nature such as university and society libraries.

Many other factors, apart from public apathy, were involved in the slow development of the public libraries. Perhaps the most serious of these was the poor housing of the working classes, in industrial areas especially, which had prevented the cultivation of the reading habit. It was argued by some, of course, that since the housing position was so bad readers should have been encouraged by the fine accommodation of the public library to use the services it offered, but the difficulty still existed of developing the love of

[1] Greenwood, Thomas, *Public Libraries* (third edition, 1890), p. 275.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 281.
[3] The italics are mine.
[4] Mackintosh, John, *The History of Civilization in Scotland*, vol. iv (1896), p. 331.
[5] *Ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 330.

books where they had not been used previously. As many of the librarians of the time appreciated, the problem was not in keeping readers, but in attracting those whose surroundings had not encouraged the reading habit.

One aspect of the public-library service which, though unobtrusive, is worthy of note concerns the emancipation of women, and may have had some influence on the progress of the movement. As one witness before the 1849 Public Libraries Committee said, there was no doubt that the intellectual condition of women in the nineteenth century was decidedly below that of men.[1] The reason is not far to seek, for they were denied the educational opportunities granted to men. The value of the new public libraries to women, therefore, was very great. Here they could advance their knowledge of science and world affairs in a manner which did not offend against Victorian behaviour and which would not otherwise have been possible. That women did make use of the libraries is borne out by the figures for staffing where they predominated. In America as late as 1923 the view was still widely held that the public library was "essentially a women's institution; that it is used chiefly by women, and purchases chiefly those books that women like to read".[2] In 1906 so distinguished a scholar as Dean Birge, of Wisconsin University, said he did not think that men would go to libraries for the same reasons as women, and went on: "We might as well admit that they will not substitute the novel for the cigar, the printed story for the companionship of the club!"[3]

While it is possible to quote these examples of contemporary views on the libraries, perhaps the most striking feature is the paucity of comment on the subject by observers other than persons professionally interested in them. There is a marked neglect of their existence or a failure to recognize their significance and future value. This neglect is to be found in all the branches of literature: not even in the story-books of the late nineteenth century is there to be found the familiar reference of modern times.

Most of the British public libraries in towns had been founded by 1905. By 1910 the first flush of municipal pride and interest had subsided, and the libraries were in many cases being given

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1849), Q. 2020.
[2] Bostwick, Arthur E., *The American Public Library* (1923), p. 122.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

scant public attention. Three examples of book expenditure in 1912–13 provide a clue to the insignificance of the libraries. Normanton Public Library, serving a population of 15,000, spent nothing on its book-stock during that year. The small town of Kelso (population 4000), which had the power to raise £100, spent £7 10*s.* on books. Dumfries Public Library (named the Ewart Library to commemorate the great pioneer of the cause), serving a population of 22,000, with the power to raise £400, spent only £5 on books in the year. In some cases the inefficiency of the library, or lack of interest in it by the township, could have been traced to the indifference of the librarian, or to his inferior qualification for the post. The last example, however, proves that this was by no means always the case, for the Dumfries librarian of the time was G. W. Shirley, whose work for the Ewart Library and Scottish libraries generally was later to gain nation-wide recognition. The mean allocation of funds for public libraries gives the lie to the notion that the rate limitation alone was strangling their development, a notion much quoted in the case for improved legislation and much used by councils in defence of their poor library services even in recent times.

In America about this time the realization had dawned that the public library did not exist exclusively for one function, moral, educational, or recreational, but for all the objects of community welfare. One librarian saw the functions as the general elevation of all mankind, education, an increase in the reading habit, and recreation only incidentally.[1]

In Britain the Library Association made an attempt with their manifesto *Public Libraries* in 1918 to assess the significance, objects, and future of public libraries. L. Stanley Jast wrote in this that there are "signs and portents that *our long obscurity*[2] is passing; we cannot afford to go on any longer just doing our job as best we can, in faith that our work, within the measure of our opportunity, is good, and that with the growing recognition of the immense importance of that work some less hopelessly inadequate financial support will be forthcoming".[3]

[1] Bailey, Louis J., in *Public Libraries* (a monthly review), vol. xix (1914), p. 385.

[2] The italics are mine.

[3] Library Association, *Public Libraries: their Development and Future Organization* (1918), p. 16.

Jast could not have been encouraged to say that by the state of public-library provision at that time, for still 43 per cent of the population was without public-library service at all. He may have derived his hope from the interest which the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust was then taking in rural-library provision as the result of the report made to them by Professor Adams.[1]

In 1913 Andrew Carnegie, feeling the strain of his age (for by then he was nearly eighty), handed over the control of his benefactions to various groups of trustees. One of the first acts of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust was to institute an inquiry into the state of public libraries, and they invited Professor W. G. S. Adams, Gladstone Professor of Political Theory and Institutions at Oxford University, to carry out the work. While showing the conditions of the existing libraries, the major outcome of the report was the exposure of the lack of service in the country areas. It showed that nearly all the towns of note in the country had a library of one kind or another, but that only one person in forty of the rural population was served in this way. Professor Adams's investigations proved too that some of the towns which had accepted Carnegie's gifts were unable to support them. The main feature of the report was its insistence that the neglected rural areas should have library provision, probably on the lines of Brown's itinerating libraries. This, of course, involved a modification of the existing legislation so as to empower county councils to become library authorities.

Despite the fact that no such change had yet been made to the law, in 1915 the Trust adopted Professor Adams's Report and proceeded to put it into practice. This virtually meant an acceptance of his recommendation of rural libraries. In order to test the new library scheme to the full, the first areas in which the experiments were tried included the islands of Orkney, Shetland, and Lewis, where transport was extremely difficult and communications slender. The headquarters eventually was established in the basement of the Dunfermline Public Library under the control of Robert D. Macleod. Great attention was paid to methods of assessing the demand and to assuring a thorough service in the area. The success of this first scheme proved to the Trustees'

[1] Adams, W. G. S., *A Report on Library Provision and Policy to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees* (1915).

satisfaction that Professor Adams's recommendations could be realized. They then selected certain other areas, and invited the appropriate local authorities to carry out extended experiments at the expense of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. The first county council to accept the Trustees' offer was that of Staffordshire, and others followed in succeeding years until in 1918 about a dozen schemes were operating at a total cost to the Trust of more than £100,000.

There can be no doubt that the success of the Carnegie Trust's experiments was responsible for the inclusion in the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918, of the permission granted to education authorities to provide books for the adult population as well as for children and other students. In England a deputation of the Trustees put the case for county libraries to the Board of Education, with the result that the Public Libraries Act (England and Wales), 1919, gave county councils the power to become library authorities.

It should not be thought that the Carnegie Trust's help to the county-library movement was received with universal praise any more than had been the case with Carnegie's gifts of municipal libraries. Indeed, this very help was used in Parliament against the 1919 Public Libraries Bill. Sir F. G. Banbury, criticizing the Bill, said: "We will deal with the question of expense on Clause 4, which is a very important Clause. Clause 1 is to allow the council of any county in England or Wales to establish public libraries in addition to the public libraries already established by the other public library authorities. The reason given for this is that the Carnegie Trust has spent a certain amount of money. It is another example of the evil of giving a certain amount of money. As soon as you have got a little you want more. When you bring in a Bill like the Anglo-Persian Oil Bill asking for a certain amount of money you are going to spend a lot more money. I do not see why at this particular period in our history we should be going in for spending additional money. The right hon. Gentleman has said that this will enable people to read books. What sort of books? My experience is that public libraries are places where, if the weather is cold, people go in to sit down and get warm, while other people go in to read novels. I do not believe, speaking generally, that public libraries have done any good. On the contrary, they have done a great deal of harm, because the books read, as far as my

information goes, are chiefly sensational novels, which do no good to anybody."[1]

Banbury's criticism seems to offer an example of the tendency, mentioned earlier, of the person whose social condition enabled him to use any books he required without having need of public libraries to assess the public library without any practical knowledge of it. It shows too that the municipal libraries, even so recently, had not conclusively demonstrated in influential quarters their profound value.

Nor should it be thought that even the most progressive social workers gave unreserved support to public libraries. Thomas Johnston in his *History of the Working Classes in Scotland*, published in 1920, mentioned public libraries only once, and then it was to deal the most scathing criticism of a newspaper which gave a priority which he felt unjustified in the face of other pressing problems. In what he called a "Disease Chart", he noted: "1875. Severe winter, and destitution; death-rate in middle-class districts of Glasgow—24 per 1000, in the poor districts 68 per 1000. The *Glasgow Herald* was agitating for public libraries!"[2]

To return again to the influence of the Library Association, it is worthy of note that all the work of establishing the early county libraries was carried out without any great help from the Association; thus again it failed in its two major objects, of promoting new libraries and of endeavouring to secure better legislation.

Colonel Sibthorp, Member of Parliament during the passage of the 1850 Public Libraries Act, has been much quoted in outlines of library history, but generally it has been for the absurdity of his remarks rather than for their value. On one occasion, however, when his opponents were stressing the value of the Libraries Bill, Sibthorp presented one argument the truth of which has been more than proved in the first century of the public library. After denouncing the Bill as absurd in every sense he said that he thought the Bill was *partial* in its operation. Had he known it, he was pointing out one of the weak foundations of the public-library system in this country: because it did not grow up all over the boroughs, towns, and counties together it lost some of its power. It was to have superseded all the other popular efforts, but, by its

[1] House of Commons: Parliamentary Debates ('Hansard'), vol. cxxii (1919), col. 1771–1772.

[2] *Op cit.*, p. 301.

partial application, it forced the growth in rural areas of parallel, non-rate-supported, systems.

By the end of 1925, however, Carnegie's gifts had ensured the commencement of more than eighty county libraries in Britain. Before these gifts it was exceptional, rather than usual, to find local authorities providing a library service, but soon the position had been reversed by Carnegie's benevolence, and by 1925 the majority of British county libraries were ensuring rural (as well as urban) service.

The municipal library was now one of the buildings which one could expect to find in any town, and Carnegie's name had become almost synonymous with public libraries: the county-library sign was to be seen in the remotest villages of the land. Public libraries now had physical significance at least. Whatever service they gave they existed throughout the rural as well as the urban districts. By their ubiquity was laid the first sound foundation of their effectiveness on a national scale.

4 *Modern Statements of Purpose*

At the end of the 1914–18 War among the matters considered by the Ministry of Reconstruction was the part to be played in the national life by the public libraries, and once again the emphasis was laid on their educational purpose.

In their Third Interim Report the Adult Education Committee made proposals for a progressive library service which even now has not been achieved. Reference was made to the need in municipal libraries for rooms for study for the many students who had no place where they could study in comfort; it was recommended that all public libraries should also have a room for classes, lectures, and discussions; that open access should be universal; and that serious students should have additional tickets. Nevertheless the Committee recognized that the value of the libraries was impaired by the restriction of expenditure imposed by law and agreed that the abolition of the latter and the extension of library powers to the county councils would greatly improve the scope and usefulness of local libraries.

"It is clear the co-operation between educational institutions and public libraries is desirable and indeed essential. The necessity for co-operation is now being increasingly recognized, and the valuable assistance which some public libraries have rendered to the work of local education authorities has given the libraries a new importance and the schools a new ally. The developments which have taken place open up new possibilities of educational advance, the realization of which will be possible only if these experiments in co-operation between school and library are translated into general practice and if there is a unity of general purpose."[1]

[1] Ministry of Reconstruction, *Third Interim Report of the Adult Education Committee, Libraries and Museums* (1919), p. 5.

The Committee considered at length the problem of whether the intimate co-operation which was desired could be attained by dual control and administration and decided finally to recommend the union of educational and library administration. "We are strongly in favour of a full co-operation between local education authorities on the one hand, and public libraries and museums on the other. We think that the local education authority should be the authority responsible for the administration of public libraries and public museums in order to ensure the closest relationship between the activities of schools, libraries, and museums. In England and Wales local authorities for higher education should be the authorities for libraries and museums, though in the case of those Part III authorities which now possess their own public libraries it would be advisable at any rate for the present, not to disturb the control of their libraries but to arrive at a working agreement between authorities for elementary education and the county authority."[1]

The strength of the Committee's views on the public library as an educational institution may be judged from the concluding remarks on the "fitting opportunity, before administration again becomes crystallized, to bring public libraries and museums into living relations with the educational system . . . The schools, libraries, and museums are an allied group of institutions, each of which will fulfil its responsibilities and realize its aims through the development of the others."[2]

In 1917 the Library Association had published a series of resolutions on the future aims of libraries not dissimilar to those in the Report (but without suggesting any link with education authorities). The Association proposed that the library should provide education in a 'free' atmosphere; that children should be specially catered for, that technical and commercial libraries should be included; and that books and other materials on local government should be collected for the benefit of those responsible for the finance and policies of the local authorities.

Shortly after the Adult Education Report was published in 1919 a new Public Libraries Act for England and Wales was passed, and among its provisions was that for the control of county-

[1] Ministry of Reconstruction, *Third Interim Report of the Adult* Education Committee, Libraries and Museums (1919), p. 18.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

library services by education committees of county councils. Otherwise the Act did little to improve the educational links with public libraries in towns. The period immediately following the Report and the Act saw on the contrary considerable protest from municipal librarians against any suggestion of education-authority control.

Another, further, report came in 1927 from a Departmental Committee, which had been appointed in October 1924 by the President of the Board of Education, "to enquire into the adequacy of the library provision already made under the Public Libraries Acts, and the means of extending and completing such provision throughout England and Wales, regard being had to the relation of the libraries conducted under these Acts to other public libraries and to the general system of national education".[1]

This Report had the advantage of being prepared after some, even though only a few, county libraries had made a start, so that its aims and definitions of service concerning them were not pure theorizing. Though the scope of the inquiry was limited to England and Wales, the findings and recommendations were of value throughout the British Isles and elsewhere.

While it makes clear its appreciation of the rapid progress in library development in recent years, the *Report* does not conceal the deficiencies, but emphasizes the need for co-operation to give a more uniform standard of service throughout the country. In its pages are to be found the reminders that "there are many parts of the country in which library activity, and the appreciation of its importance, fall short of a satisfactory standard",[2] that "even now we should not venture to say that the possibilities of the public library are always adequately recognised"[3] and that the mere existence of a library service does not necessarily imply that its service is in any way adequate.[4] Further emphasis is given to the inequalities of service by the *Report's* recommendation (never adopted, however) that the county borough of Hastings and the several counties which had not yet adopted the Acts, or had done so for only part of their area, should be constituted library authorities by statute.

Tacitly, as well as explicitly, the Committee express a wider

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1927), p. 3.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 203.

conception of the functions of public libraries than had hitherto been admitted. Having described the work of better public libraries as "an indispensable element in the life of the community", the *Report* details that work.

These public libraries "provide information essential for the progress of commerce and industry; they make research possible in every department of intellectual life; they aid solitary students in their investigations; they provide relaxation and refreshment for every class of the population".[1] There is no question of pursuing this or that narrow line of service, no doubts as to whether the library is primarily concerned with education *or* recreation, but at last a confident assurance that the question lies not so much in one or the other, but in how best the library can meet the need in both fields.

So fundamental and far-seeing are the views expressed that they justify full quotation in any study of library function.

"The public library should be the centre of the intellectual life of the area which it serves. That intellectual life covers all stages, from the incipient curiosity of those whose intelligence is only beginning to awaken to the advanced research of the highly trained specialist. The library has to serve not only the earnest seekers after knowledge, but also those who are merely gratifying an elementary curiosity, and those who are seeking relaxation and recreation. We are very far from decrying the recreational use of libraries. On the contrary, we believe it to be one of their most valuable services to supply that intelligent refreshment which we all need; and if for some that recreation is found in literature which does not appeal to more highly cultured minds, it is to be regarded as a foundation for better things, and as, at worst, preferable to other modes of recreation which exist as alternatives."[2]

"The principle underlying the library service is that it exists for the training of the good citizen. It must aim at providing all that printed literature can provide to develop his intellectual, moral, and spiritual capabilities."[3]

"The librarian aims, therefore, at supplying recreational literature of as good quality as his public can digest; at placing

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1927), p. 37.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40.

at their disposal the information necessary for the ordinary duties of a citizen; and at supplying all their needs for intellectual culture and for the knowledge that they require in their several professions and occupations. It is his duty to see that, so far as the means placed at his disposal permit, the books that they require, whether for recreation, for information, or for research, are on the shelves of his library; and he has besides the important function of acting as their guide to the use of the treasures which he holds for them."[1]

In the chapter dealing with county libraries the *Report* agrees that the needs of the town and country student are the same, and notes in detail six aims for those responsible for county-library policy:

"(i) To relieve the tedium of idle hours quite irrespective of intellectual profit or educational gain. It is sufficient to satisfy this purpose that the rural inhabitant should be rendered a happier (and not necessarily a more learned) man by the provision which is made for him.

"(ii) To secure that the taste for good English which should be acquired in the elementary school is kept alive and developed by a provision of good literature after school years have ended.

"(iii) To enable the rural inhabitant to acquire, without difficulty, that general knowledge which alone can enable him to appreciate to the full what he sees and hears.

"(iv) To impart that knowledge of public affairs and of the history of his own neighbourhood which a citizen must possess if he is to perform with intelligence his duties as a member of the community ultimately responsible for the government of the parish, rural district, county and country.

"(v) To provide facilities for the study of the arts, trades and professions which constitute the occupation of the inhabitants.

"(vi) To remove as far as possible all obstacles from the path of the serious student of any subject."[2]

In calling "particular attention to (iv), as representing an object which is of supreme political importance, most difficult of attainment, and most apt to be neglected",[3] the *Report* is echoing the hopes of such men as Chancellor Christie and Sir John Potter,

[1] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1927), p. 40.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 95.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

who saw in the nineteenth century the need for an educated community in political progress.

Perhaps the *Report's* greatest importance lies in the fact that it "marks the definite acceptance of Public Libraries as part of the educational equipment of the country", and "the stage is passed when Public Libraries can be scoffed at as doing little but provide second-rate fiction for the use of the idle and the foolish".[1]

Indeed, the 1927 *Report* is the turning-point towards the obvious significance of the British public library.[2]

The next major report on British libraries was that based on the survey made in 1936–7 by the Library Association, and which was published in 1938. Since the primary aim of the survey was to compile information on conditions in public libraries, little appears in the report on the functions they were attempting to fulfil. Once again one cannot fail to be struck by the inequality among the libraries' services and facilities. The editor, L. R. McColvin, launched his introduction to the report bluntly: "There is probably no public service wherein methods and achievements vary more considerably from place to place and from country to country than the public library service."[3]

One factor considered by McColvin to be essential in promoting the advancement of libraries is noted thus: "Those responsible for library provision should be able to see themselves as others see them, to survey their own work in proper perspective. Surprisingly few are able to do this as completely as they believe they can."[4] No effort was made by the editor to elaborate this statement, nor did he, on this occasion, attempt to explain why so few librarians could assess the success or failure of their work. Perhaps it may be simply that many librarians had not by then

[1] Kenyon, Sir Frederic G., *Libraries and Museums* (1930), p. 40. (Sir Frederic Kenyon was Chairman of the 1927 Public Libraries Committee.)

[2] In the United States by 1927 there had been in existence for more than twenty years a committee of the American Library Association on publicity. This suggests the realization that there is a need for even a good service to advertise itself in one way or another if the fullest benefit is to be offered to the community. The formation of such a committee may also indicate that the American public library of 1906 had not yet established its fullest significance, nor justified the claims of its sponsors to their satisfaction.

[3] Library Association, *A Survey of Libraries, 1936–1937* (1938), p. 1.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

been able to determine very clearly what they were trying to do, what they were seeking to provide, what were their aims and functions.

In any case, McColvin left the matter in no doubt when he undertook his own survey for the Library Association during the 1939–45 War. At the very outset of his report he laid down his ideas on the purpose of public-library service.[1]

The report provides in detail a recapitulation of the several purposes which McColvin had described in an earlier book, *Libraries and the Public*, and adds to them the views of a few correspondents. His earlier statement that the "prime function of librarianship" lies in "providing the best and most useful material people are willing and wishful to use",[2] though not quoted, is usefully expanded to show clearly the necessarily wide conception of library service if the fullest use is to be made of the public libraries.

"The library service exists to serve—to give without question, favour or limitations. It is an instrument for the promotion of all or any of the activities of its readers. Therefore, secondly, it must be catholic and all-embracing. Whenever, as may often be the case because of financial and other limitations, it must choose between types of provision, this must always be in accord with the value of the services to the individuals requiring them—not because of our own idea or opinion of what the demands should be. So, the third and all important tenet is that libraries should be 'free in every sense'—not only universally available regardless of a man's resources, but free also in the sense that they offer sanctuary to all facets of opinion and all aspects of knowledge."[3]

As the direct result of McColvin's survey the Library Association (of which he was then Honorary Secretary) issued its *Proposals for the Post-war Development of the Public Library Service* in 1943. While these proposals were mainly on the organization of the service, they indicated once more that the library was now becoming recognized as an instrument capable of wide application and possibility. "The public library cannot be regarded primarily as a part of the formal educational machinery but must instead be

[1] McColvin, L. R., *The Public Library System of Great Britain* (1942), pp. 2–6.

[2] McColvin, L. R., *Libraries and the Public* (1937), p. 25.

[3] McColvin, L. R., *The Public Library System of Great Britain* (1942), pp. 4–5.

developed as an independent, though complementary, organization designed to further not education alone but any and every phase of thought and action in which books can be of value."[1]

The similarity of the Library Association's statement of library aims to that of its United States counterpart is worthy of note. From 1943 until 1948 the American Library Association was in the process of assaying its stated aims for American public libraries. As the result of these studies three statements appeared successively, one in 1943[2] and two in 1948.[3] Later the Public Library Inquiry, financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and carried out by a team of experts from various fields, amalgamated the three statements of library objectives, and confirmed that not only official opinion but the views of the vast majority of librarians agreed with these aims.

The consolidated statement consisted of three main parts, of which the first was a general definition of objectives, as follows:

"(1) To assemble, preserve, and administer books and related educational materials in organized collections, in order to promote, through guidance and stimulation, an enlightened citizenship and enriched personal lives.

"(2) To serve the community as a general centre of reliable information.

"(3) To provide opportunity and encouragement for children, young people, men and women to educate themselves continuously."

The second part of the statement was concerned with the "fields of knowledge and interest to which the public library should devote its resources", and detailed these under six headings:

"(1) Public affairs; citizenship
(2) Vocations
(3) Æsthetic appreciation
(4) Recreation
(5) Information
(6) Research."

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

[2] American Library Association: Committee on Post-war Planning, *Post-war Standards for Public Libraries* (1943), Chapter 2.

[3] American Library Association: Committee on Post-war Planning, *A National Plan for Public Library Service* (1948), Chapter 1. American Library Association, *Four-year Goals* (1948).

The statement concluded by outlining "library means for attaining the library objectives". These means include

"(1) Kinds of materials
(2) Availability of materials
(3) Guidance
(4) Stimulation and leadership, and
(5) Emphasis."[1]

The American Library Association has maintained its review of standards and has adopted "Goals for Action". In this continuing process inevitably the functions of public libraries are repeated. In *Minimum Standards for Public Library Systems, 1966*, issued in 1967, these functions were noted as follows:

"The modern public library collects the printed and audio-visual materials needed to conduct the individual and group life of its constituency. It organizes and makes accessible its resources to be convenient and easy to use. It interprets and guides the use of materials to enable as many people as possible to apply in their daily lives the record of what is known. Collections; organization and distribution; interpretation and guidance—lack of any one of these results in sub-standard library service.

"In essence, the public library provides materials and services. The other topics discussed in this document—personnel, physical facilities, etc.—have to do with the necessary means of achieving adequacy in these functions.

"The books and other resources of the library constitute the road by which each individual can escape from his limitations; thus selection of needed materials is a basic function of the public library. In making its choices from the vast array of available material, the public library must be guided not only by the demands of those who use the library constantly; it must also be aware of unspoken needs within the community if it is to serve effectively as an open door to the wisdom and experience of all mankind.

"Its materials are provided:

To facilitate informal self-education of all people in the community

To enrich and further develop the subjects on which individuals are undertaking formal education

[1] Leigh, Robert D., *The Public Library in the United States: the General Report of the Public Library Inquiry* (1950), pp. 16–17.

To meet the informational needs of all

To support the educational, civic, and cultural activities of groups and organizations

To encourage wholesome recreation and constructive use of leisure time.

"Provision of materials means more than occasional availability. It means a supply sufficient to make the library a dependable source for most people most of the time. In addition to books, the public library selects and provides pamphlets, documents, and other nonbook sources in printed form, and films, tapes, discs, and other nonprint stores of knowledge and opinion.

"Providing materials is only the first step. The second basic function—that which differentiates a library from a mere collection of books and other materials—is service, encompassing:

The organization of material to make it easily accessible to potential users

Lending procedures to ensure that materials may be used at the time and place desired by the public

Guidance to assist the user to find what he wishes, either in the material immediately at hand or in whatever library may possess it

A program of public information to make its resources not only available but eagerly sought by its community."[1]

The position was summarized again in the Association's *Goals for Action* statement adopted in 1967. The first of the major goals is: "The provision of public library service that will enable the public library to be a strong educational force to help every American fulfil his obligations as an informed citizen and achieve full self-development." The Association sees its objective as "the provision of adequate library service of excellent quality freely available to all. To achieve this objective the Association proposes a dynamic program looking to the provision of library services and informational resources to support education and research at all levels and to the provision of books for recreation and for continuing self-development."[2]

Inevitably the definition of a "strong educational force" changes with the passing of time, and this was recognized by the National Advisory Commission on Libraries in its 1968 report to the

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 8–9.

[2] *American Library Association Bulletin* (September 1967), p. 951.

President. "The roles of the public library are changing. The relative inefficiency of completely self-planned instruction and the increasing availability of organized instruction within the community have decreased the function of the public library as the university of the poor. Nevertheless, as educational demands upon the public library by the educational system itself increase, and as the sophistication of the community increases, the public library becomes an essential element within the community as an information reservoir for multiple user groups."[1]

The same is true of public libraries in Britain. Nevertheless, although it is true that formal education is universally available it is still by no means the case that all who could make use of books and libraries leave school aware of this fact. There is a glib assumption that a community which provides universal teaching of reading to children for ten years must be literate. The public library still has a serious duty to inculcate in those who did not gain from their school years an appreciation of the value of literacy in economic as well as in other terms.

These practical terms were well emphasized in the New Zealand Library Association's Standards Research Committee statement on functions as far back as 1950.

"Taken broadly, the functions of a public library can be stated as follows (quoted from the National Library Service annual report, 1950):

"1. It can contribute to family life, which is still the unit of social life. A service of books, on the domestic arts, sewing, cooking, interior decoration, infant management and child psychology, gardening, joinery and the home workshop should be freely available on the widest possible basis to help maintain the standard of home life.

"2. The library should help the community towards fruitful use of leisure time. For this, books are necessary for proficiency in sports and hobbies—radio, motor engineering, the building of trailer caravans, for example.

"3. It can be the most valuable instrument of democracy and good citizenship. Where no good library exists, books written by zealots and propagandists, and newspapers which tend to be sensational, can be potent weapons of subversion. But a good library service providing material in open, balanced, many-sided

[1] *American Library Association Bulletin* (January 1969), p. 72.

collections on policies, mass movements, economics, citizenship, and government can help to make democracy sane, informed, stable, and real.

"4. The library can sustain and raise the standards of public and social conduct. Into this field comes, for instance, the subject of health education, and a service should be given which will help the layman on matters such as nutrition, prevention of sickness, and mental instability.

"5. The library is the most powerful instrument for sustaining the desire to learn. The discursive reading done by children will be maintained as they grow into adults if good supplies of well-chosen books are provided in pleasant surroundings.

"6. There should be assistance given to citizen groups. Societies active in drama, music, parent-teacher work, and so on, must be able to look to the library for help and inspiration.

"7. In the same way farmers, business and professional men should expect the library to make an important contribution to the economic life of the community, by keeping books and periodicals up to date with the technological advances that are being made.

"8. The presentation of art and imaginative literature in abundance, the great works of fiction, drama, poetry, and painting is an important function of the library in keeping the people in touch with the finest products of civilization of all ages. This field will be enjoyed by almost everyone.

"9. And the library is the place for people who want 'a book to read.' Those who want light fiction should be able to obtain it from the library as a convenient place, but should not expect a service of this kind of material to be provided from public funds. A service of westerns, detective and romance novels can be given efficiently only on a commercial basis."[1]

In studying this list of aims it should be borne in mind that the New Zealand National Library Service was mainly concerned with the smaller libraries of the Dominion, and thus the emphasis was on those facets of service most likely to be recognized and appreciated by authorities and potential readers of these libraries. In this manner—reminiscent of the fiction-lure to create a reading public for general literature—readers may be encouraged eventually to read books not only of a practical nature, but which also

[1] *New Zealand Libraries*, vol. xv, No. 6 (1952), pp. 122–123.

stimulate thought and whet the appetite for knowledge. Similarly, librarians in New Zealand have encountered apathy to public libraries in responsible circles, as was found in Britain until abstruse statements of the vague generalities of purpose were abandoned in favour of objectives clearly stated as being suitable for a particular community and need. This New Zealand summary of the functions of the public library was just such an effort to make the people conscious of the realities of the library's potential; by specific examples of its service, individuals were shown an opportunity to develop personal interests, and authorities were given the promise of an improved community life.

At the basic level of economics it has been shown that the New Zealand farmers who read extensively are the most successful.[1]

Failure to demonstrate clearly the impact of the libraries may have disastrous effects. Indeed, it is imperative that the potential is realized in practical terms. A United States survey, made after a demonstration library project, showed that although the latter had appeared to be fulfilling its purpose the farming communities had not felt the impact. Rather the farmers had hoped for something more specific to their own circumstances, but had found that their main interests in satisfying practical needs had not been met; this led to a feeling that the service was more suited to the needs of women and children than to theirs.[2] This emphasizes that statements of purpose, aims, and hopes should be backed by practical reality if these are not simply going to stultify the library service.

The recognition of the public library as a multi-purpose social institution is now world-wide, as may be seen in the flexible interpretation of its aims throughout the world. In Britain, the United States, and, perhaps to a lesser degree, in Scandinavia, Germany, and countries of the Commonwealth, there is a basic motive of free choice to the reader to allow him to fulfil any of his personal, professional, or political aspirations. This has resulted in widely based book-stocks.

This attitude to comprehensive coverage was well exemplified by the Danish Government in defining objectives in the Public Libraries Act 1950, which opened thus: "The aim of public

[1] *Cf.* McSweeney, D. B., in *New Zealand Libraries* (March 1964), pp. 33–37.

[2] Bundy, M. L., in *Illinois Libraries* (November 1960), pp. 543–577.

libraries is to promote the general diffusion of knowledge and information by means of fiction and non-fiction books which lead to the general development of culture."

The official regulation No. 169 of May 13th, 1965, expounding the provisions of the more recent Danish Public Libraries Act 1964 (which became effective, like its British counterpart, on April 1st, 1965), contained guidance on the work of the libraries and specified the intentions of the service. "The purpose of public libraries is to promote the spread of knowledge, education and culture by making books and other suitable materials available free of charge. These requirements shall be fulfilled by quality, comprehensiveness and actuality in the choice of the material placed at the disposal of the public by the municipal libraries. In the field of fiction the libraries shall be able to provide their readers with access to the best of the literature in Danish. The choice of literature is to be decided by the literary value of the book alone and not by the religious, moral or political points of view contained therein. The composition of the bookstock of non-fiction literature is governed by corresponding requirements, in that, while taking due consideration to the size and make-up of the service area concerned, the bookstock shall include both elementary and more advanced works within all fields. The library stocks of periodicals and newspapers shall be composed on corresponding lines."[1]

Here is a clear indication that although the quality of book-collections is to be high there is to be no undue censorship, no undue preference for the academic at the expense of the ordinary reader's needs.

In Germany this is a more recent aspect of the service where prior to the 1930's public libraries were more academic in outlook, with no interest in popular-reading provision. Even now those concerned with adult education would still be inclined to regard this as the primary function of the libraries. Progressively, however, this difference in emphasis is disappearing, with German libraries providing more popular material.

Any comparison of British aims with those of other countries tends to emphasize the almost imperceptible hardening of attitude in many British public libraries to the lightest type of book. Nevertheless, this material is still provided quite generously on

[1] *Op. cit.*, para. 21.

the basis that it helps to avoid among its readers the feeling that they are somehow excluded from literature or the library.

In a paper to the Library Association annual conference in 1962 A. H. Bill pointed to the potential of the public library, properly organized and properly supported. "It could be a storehouse of information for the citizens of our complex and technical society, it could preserve and present freely to each individual the whole range of art and culture, and thus do something to counter the many false and hollow values which commercial interests try to foist on us. And perhaps most important of all, by the way in which it makes freely available to the community learning and knowledge and opinion, the public library could help to maintain the freedoms of informed choice and personal decision which are vital to democracy."

Bill went on to criticize two misconceptions which he identified as

"1. The (public) library is a collection of books.

2. It provides a service for various types of readers."

In place of these outdated ideas, he suggested that "the public library has as its main purpose the provision of a community information service. It is at present also required to provide a recreational reading service, but this is neither an essential nor the most important of its functions and is a secondary consideration. Secondly, following from the first point, the library is not a collection of books but a collection of information in various forms, which has to be gathered, organised and fully exploited to be made fully and speedily available to every user. This is a dynamic definition as opposed to the older static concepts and, if fully accepted, would lead to radical changes in our present methods of techniques. Thirdly, the service we give is a service to individuals, not a service for groups or types of readers: individuals whose needs and interests are infinitely varied and combined, so that—for example—one person can be successively or simultaneously child, teenager, lover, student, parent, scientist, housewife, artist, Presbyterian, yachtsman, singer, and many other things, making in each capacity different demands on the service."[1]

In the countries of the Commonwealth with library services of recent establishment the primary objective is educational. Even in Canada and Australia the successful library is that which puts

[1] Library Association, *Proceedings of the Annual Conference* (1962), pp. 64–65.

its emphasis on information rather than on pastime reading. Too many libraries do not meet adequately the needs for serious informational and educational works because they are overstocked with light fiction.[1]

In the developing countries of Africa and the Caribbean there is also an emphasis on the educational function in line with the aspirations of the emergent nations. India, although its public libraries are not well developed throughout the country, has the inspiration of the distinguished S. R. Ranganathan, whose authoritative works are recognized throughout the world. In his *Manual* he outlines the library as a social institution. "As such, it has to serve several purposes:

1. It should help the life-long self-education of one and all;
2. It should furnish up-to-date facts and information on all subjects to one and all;
3. It should distribute, in an unbiased and balanced way, all shades of recorded views and thought to one and all, as a help in the discharge of their political functions in respect of local, national, and international affairs;
4. It should contribute to productivity-drive by informing top-managements of the latest trends in diverse enterprises, by ploughing back into the minds of researchers, designers, and technologists every piece of relevant new thought, promptly and pin-pointedly;
5. It should provide to one and all a harmless and elevating use of leisure;
6. It should preserve the literary remains of humanity for posterity, as vehicles of culture and as source materials for antiquarian research; and in general
7. It should work for continued social well-being, as the agency in charge of all socialised recorded thought.

"Thus a library has educational, information, political, economic, industrial, cultural, and antiquarian functions."[2]

In the predominantly Catholic countries of Western Europe the public-library service has been of recent growth, and its aims have largely been in line with the Church's attitudes. An indication

[1] *Cf.* Hammond, Arthur, in *Ontario Library Review* (November 1960), pp. 217–223. Sharr, F. A., in *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* (August–September 1957), p. 204.

[2] Ranganathan, S. R., *Library Manual* (1960), p. 21.

of liberal intent is to be found in the Belgian Ministry of Education and Culture's handbook on the public-library service. In its opening definition it states: "A public library will be accepted as such when it is open to all and has a stock of books adequate for the educational, recreational and informational needs of its public. It must never be the instrument of political propaganda, or of proselytism, religious or anti-religious."

This is in direct contrast with the objectives of the public libraries as seen in Eastern European countries, where instruction in Communist principles is one of the primary duties of the public library. Statements of library objectives often begin with the prerequisite that the public library should not be passive but should actively and deliberately encourage the reading of books and other materials which propagate Communist and atheist principles. The great concern with economic advancement in Communist countries too has led to a considerable concentration by their libraries in this field, with emphasis on the professional and general education of the workers and work with children.

The interest of these facts for this present study is that they emphasize the flexible adaptability of library services and that these have been recognized in Eastern Europe as potent tools for government use.

Perhaps enough evidence has now been quoted to show the diversity of the public-library service and its objectives throughout the world. In Britain the original advocacy of public libraries on purely moral grounds has now receded, and this is not now considered as a major purpose—though, in the face of post-War illiteracy, crime, and general permissiveness, speculation might well be given to the value of reviving an energetic interest in these moral objectives of the library. The importance of the arguments on a moral basis submitted a century ago is twofold. They are noteworthy, because they may have had the desired moral effect at that time, but, further, they demonstrate the claim of the public library to being a truly flexible social institution ready to face the prevalent problem of any generation and to attack it vigorously alone or in co-operation with bodies similarly engaged.

Not only in the individual progressive countries has the public library gained confidence. Towards the end of 1949 there was issued the Unesco *Public Library Manifesto*, the first truly international declaration of the responsibility and the potential of the

library. Embodied in it is to be found once again a definition of objectives and means of attaining them.

"This manifesto, by describing the potentialities of the public library, proclaims Unesco's belief in the public library as a living force for popular education and for the growth of international understanding, and thereby for the promotion of peace.

"The public library is a product of modern democracy and a practical demonstration of democracy's faith in universal education as a life-long process.

"Though primarily intended to serve the educational needs of adults, the public library should also supplement the work of schools in developing the reading tastes of children and young people, helping them to become adults who can use books with appreciation and profit.

"As a democratic institution, operated by the people for the people, the public library should be: established and maintained under clear authority of law; supported wholly or mainly from public funds; open for free use on equal terms to all members of the community, regardless of occupation, creed, class, or race.

"The complete public library should provide: books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, maps, pictures, films, music scores and recordings, and give guidance in their use.

"The public library should offer children, young people, men and women, opportunity and encouragement: to educate themselves continually; to keep abreast of progress in all fields of knowledge; to maintain freedom of expression and a constructively critical attitude towards all public issues; to be better social and political citizens of their country and of the world; to be more efficient in their day-to-day activities; to develop their creative capacities and powers of appreciation in arts and letters; to aid generally in the advancement of knowledge; to use their leisure time to promote personal happiness and social well-being.

"The public library should be active and positive in its policy and a dynamic part of community life.

"It should not tell people what to think, but it should help them to decide what to think about. The spotlight should be thrown on significant issues by exhibitions, book-lists, discussions, lectures, courses, films and individual reading guidance.

"Reading interests should be stimulated and the library's

services publicized through a well-planned continuous public relations programme.

"The public library should link its activities with the work of other educational, cultural and social agencies—the schools, universities, museums, labour unions, study clubs, adult education groups, etc. It should also co-operate with other librarians in the loan of publications and with library associations for the advancement of public librarianship.

"The books in the library should be made accessible on open shelves and by use of efficient technical processes; and the library's service should be brought close to the homes and work-places of the people by means of branches and mobile units.

"With a well-trained, resourceful and imaginative staff, an adequate budget and public support, a public library can become what it should be—a university of the people offering a liberal education to all comers.

"Citizens have need of such opportunities for self-education at all times. The complexity and instability of life today makes the need an urgent one.

"This manifesto has described the potentialities of the public library as an agency for popular education. Obviously it is to your personal advantage to have these potentialities realized in your community. What can you do to help?

"If your community does not have public library service: interest your friends and neighbours and local organizations in obtaining such a service; ask your national library association or Ministry of Education what steps you should take to get public library service; follow through on the action recommended.

"If your community now has a public library: get acquainted with the librarians; find out what services are offered; use these services.

"Work with the librarian to promote local support and demand for the standard of service endorsed in this manifesto."[1]

Recognizing that the implementation of the *Manifesto* could not be uniform when the library services in some countries were good whereas elsewhere they were non-existent, Unesco has organized meetings to discuss the problems and their solution. The first of these was an international seminar, nominally a "School for Librarians", in Manchester and London in the summer of 1948. The success of this meeting and experience with seminars in other

[1] Unesco, *Public Library Manifesto* (1949), para. 2 to end.

fields led to the Malmö Seminar on Libraries in Adult and Fundamental Education in July-August 1950. Apart from their recommendations particular to the prime topic, the participants commended to Unesco the organization of regional seminars or conferences to discuss specific topics. This advice was taken and led to a series of such meetings throughout the world. At each of these the objectives of library service were discussed.

Because much of Latin America was without public libraries a conference for public librarians from that area was organized by Unesco in collaboration with the Organization of American States, the Brazilian Government, and the Sao Paulo State and City authorities. The conference was in the city's public library in 1951, and the participants included in their recommendations the definition and objectives of the public library.

"The Public Library, a product of modern democracy, and its foremost agent for the integral education of the people, is the institution which conserves and organizes human knowledge in order to place it at the service of the community without distinction of profession, creed, class or race.

"Its objectives shall be:

1. To offer to the public information, books, diverse materials and facilities for the best service of their interests and intellectual requirements.
2. To stimulate freedom of expression and a constructive critical attitude towards the solution of social problems.
3. To educate man to participate in a creative manner in community life and to promote a better understanding between individuals, groups and nations.
4. To extend the activities of the centres of learning, offering new educational possibilities to the people."

The Conference pointed out "the importance of public library work for the cultural elevation of communities" and recommended "the decisive co-operation of libraries with institutions which promote fundamental and basic education, such as national boards directing centres to combat illiteracy, and the Regional Centre of Fundamental Education for Latin America".

The recommendations also included a note on the function of the librarian.

"The librarian is the agent of society charged with the conservation, organization, distribution and stimulation of knowledge.

"His action is eminently that of teaching, not only so far as conservation of fundamental or basic education is concerned, but also with regard to its extension and amplification.

"He is responsible for awakening interest and the habit of reading, and stimulating the development of intellectual activities in the individual to the benefit of the social group."[1]

Another important regional library discussion was held when aid was given to the Nigerian Government in 1953 in organizing at Ibadan the first Regional Seminar on the Development of Public Libraries in Africa.

One contributor, Barbara Mullane, expressed the view that "one of the functions of the public library in Africa should be to follow up mass education programmes by providing books of all types, so that what has been learnt in adult education classes is not immediately forgotten again through lack of reading material".[2]

Among the conclusions of the seminar the objectives of library service in Africa were set out.

"In general, the public library must be considered a multi-purpose agency which exists to serve several purposes simultaneously. Objectives cannot be stated categorically in terms of any single global formula universally applicable. Rather, the aims and purposes of any dynamic public library service (in Africa as elsewhere) must be rooted in and evolve out of the needs, interests and conditions prevailing in the service area.

"There is, however, general agreement that the public library in Africa should seek to serve, in greater or less degree as the particular situation warrants, the following main purposes: (*a*) to support and reinforce programmes of adult and fundamental education; (*b*) to provide effective services for children and young people, including requisite services for schools; (*c*) to provide needed information and reference services; (*d*) to promote and stimulate reading for pleasure and recreation; (*e*) to provide, wherever needed, adequate services for special groups, *i.e.* women and girls, language groups, etc., in order to ensure availability of resources on equal terms to all members of the community."[3]

[1] Unesco, Sao Paulo Conference, October 1951, *Development of Public Libraries in Latin America* (1952), pp. 172–173.

[2] *Development of Public Libraries in Africa: the Ibadan Seminar* (1954), p. 27.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

A second seminar on African public-library development held in 1962 reaffirmed these views, and among other things drafted a general law on libraries with the first section on purpose: "*Article 1.* Libraries are the depositories of the cultural heritage. They disseminate works of all kinds calculated to promote the development of the general culture and recreation of citizens, without distinction of race, religion or political opinion."[1]

The first seminar on public libraries in Asia was held in Delhi in 1955 at the invitation of the Indian Government. Its conclusions echoed those of earlier meetings on the public library's value in social, material, and cultural development of the citizen and noted its "special importance in the modern state for the diffusion of ideas, the creative use of leisure and the preservation of national culture. The public library is not primarily an institution for scholars and students, nor an instrument for formal education. It should be an independent service for use according to the individual needs of the citizen. It can give special assistance in the advancement of technical knowledge and skills by distribution of literature at two levels, advanced and elementary."[2]

Five years later at a regional seminar on South Asian libraries, again held in Delhi, it was reported that important social and adult-education projects had been launched in Asia, often as part of comprehensive community-development programmes, and that public libraries were being used as social education centres. The need for clear co-operation with adult education groups was stressed, as was the importance of museums and mass-communication media.[3]

A meeting of experts on the national planning of library services in Latin America, held in Quito in 1966, formulated suggestions and criteria for the structure of the library systems of Ecuador and stated the functions of public libraries quite generally as follows:

"To provide free library services to all persons, irrespective of race, religion or politics.

"To take an active part in the implementation of the cultural programmes of the community, to provide library services for schools not having their own libraries, and to participate in adult library campaigns."[4]

[1] Unesco, *Bulletin for Libraries* (March–April 1963), p. 120.
[2] *Public Libraries for Asia: the Delhi Seminar* (1956), p. 23.
[3] Unesco, *Bulletin for Libraries* (March–April 1961), p. 72.
[4] Unesco, *Bulletin for Libraries* (December 1966), p. 289.

As if to emphasize their *Manifesto* and (mainly through photographs of libraries throughout the world) to demonstrate some progress, Unesco published, in 1961, *Public Libraries and their Mission*, by André Maurois. In it are to be found again the general and important specific aims of public libraries.

"The library is an essential companion to school and university. *I would go so far as to say that education is but a key to open the doors of libraries.*"

"The public library must give children, young people, men and women the opportunity to keep in touch with their times, in every sphere. By offering them, impartially, works representing conflicting points of view, it enables them to form their own opinions and preserve that attitude of constructive criticism towards public affairs without which there is no freedom."

"*Every library is a centre for international understanding.* By its very existence, free from propaganda and prejudice and with no axe of its own to grind, the public library serves peace as well as democracy."

"A modern public library is therefore an active, dynamic institution. It goes half-way to meet the reader, anxious to know his needs and meet them, and to attract him by offering various ways and means of obtaining information, cultivating his mind and finding relaxation."[1]

Maurois' "key to open the doors of libraries" was echoed in the Colloquy organized by the Council of Europe and attended by representatives of sixteen countries in Namur in 1966; its subject was "Public Libraries and Life-long Education." The Colloquy made recommendations to the Council of Europe which were summarized in their conclusions:

"The Colloquy consider that public libraries have a significant role to play in connection both with life-long education and the intelligent use of leisure . . . for the personal development and happiness of the individual and the benefit of the community . . .

"The Colloquy refer to the *Manifesto* published by Unesco in 1949 on the public library as a living force in popular education, to which they subscribe without reservation . . . At this first conference on public libraries under the auspices of the Council of Europe, they have attempted to amplify and supplement that Manifesto.

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 12–13.

"The Colloquy recognize that the development of library services in the different countries depends on many factors, and that the needs are determined by regional and local circumstances . . .

"It is the function of the public library to ensure the spread of knowledge, education and culture to all groups of the population according to their cultural, economic and social needs, collectively and individually . . .

"Public libraries should provide all the means necessary for the spread of information and ideas, primarily by making available books and other printed material and giving advice as to their use. To do this effectively they must give access to a comprehensive and appropriate collection of books and other material which will give readers the opportunity of studying every field of knowledge without restriction. The Colloquy recommend that all these services should be provided free of charge.

"In addition, the library should provide audio-visual materials and accommodation for educational and cultural activities.

"It is essential that the library be adequately staffed and that there should be close co-operation between librarians and other persons concerned with education of children and of adults . . . and with those authorities responsible for the organization of leisure-time activities.

"Professional training courses for librarians should include the concepts of life-long education and the use of leisure-time . . .

"Activities carried out by a well-organized library in its basic service can be effectively supported by extension activities. The purpose of these activities is to encourage people to read, especially those who do not consider books as their principal source of information.

"The concept of 'extension activities' can be taken to include, on the one hand, cultural activities organized by groups in the premises and with the equipment of the public library and, on the other, activities organized directly by the library in the interest of the community. Some libraries might themselves be regarded as effective cultural centres while all would work in close association with cultural institutions.

"Considering that public libraries are mass-communication media comparable with the Press, radio, cinema, television, etc., the Colloquy believe that there should be co-operation between

public libraries and these other media. Libraries should take the initiative in establishing contacts with them and should try to influence their activities."[1]

The most recent statements of the purpose of public libraries in England and Wales are to be found firstly in the Roberts Report,[2] which had such a stimulating effect on the service between its publication in 1959 and the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, and secondly in the Bourdillon Report,[3] which examined and expounded some of the technical implications of the Roberts Report.

The Roberts Committee quoted the Kenyon Report statement that in all the busy centres of national activity "the public library is no longer regarded as a means of providing casual recreation of an innocent but somewhat unimportant character; it is recognised as an engine of great potentialities for national welfare and as the essential foundation for the progress in education and culture without which no people can hold its own in the struggle for existence".[4] The Roberts Committee went on to say that casual recreation is still a perfectly legitimate need but it is no longer the basic motive of library use and the concept of a library's responsibilities has been enlarged and intensified. "Furthermore, this expansion will continue. The greatly increased provision of secondary and university education and the greatly increased numbers of persons receiving scientific and technological training will lead students and other persons engaged in industry and research to make more demands on the resources of public libraries and the general public to make more and better use of them . . .

"Thus, the essential function of a public library is to supply to any reader, or group of readers, the books and related material for which they may ask. This provision should take precedence of all ancillary services . . .

"It is the function of a public library not only to satisfy, but to promote, the desire for books. Consequently the provision of a children's library with adequate stocks and expert guidance in the choice of books should be regarded as an integral part of the

[1] Council of Europe, Council for Cultural Co-operation, *Colloque: Bibliothèques Publiques et Education Permanente* (1967), pp. 27–29.

[2] Ministry of Education, *The Structure of the Public Library Service in England and Wales* (1959).

[3] Ministry of Education, *Standards of Public Library Service in England and Wales* (1962).

[4] Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1927), p. 37.

library service. Children cannot be taught too early that there are other books besides school-books. It is also important to cater for the needs of the young adult.

"The increased demand for books in education and the rapid development, particularly since the war, of school libraries have given a new urgency to the suggestions for co-operation between the education and library authorities. Where such co-operation has been achieved, the librarian's knowledge of books and of the techniques of librarianship, combined with the teacher's knowledge of children and of the processes of learning, is profitable to both. Public libraries can supplement the stock supplied by the education authority; they should assist such bodies as the extra-mural departments of universities and the Workers' Educational Association in the supply of books for classes; they should give help to hospitals and similar institutions. The public library is also an obviously suitable centre for exhibitions, lectures, adult education classes and discussion groups . . ."[1]

The educational function of the public library is thus again emphasized. The Ministry of Education Working Party *Report on Standards of Public Library Service in England and Wales* in 1962 stressed "the need for a positive rather than a perfunctory approach to the public library and its duties".

The Working Party divided the essential function as defined by the Roberts Committee—of supplying readers with the books and other related material for which they ask—into two aspects, of providing these resources directly on the spot and of providing access to other resources. "Every public library should be not only a storehouse in itself but a gateway to the full resources of the region and of the country." The *Report* described the wide range and good quality required in a book-stock and outlined the means of guiding the reader; it specified the service to children and young adults; it emphasized as essential reference and information services; it referred to the need to provide not only the books and information for the student but also the accommodation in which he could use them; and it drew attention to the role of the public library as a centre of cultural life, including provision for lectures, film-shows, and similar activities as well as facilities for the loan of non-book material, such as gramophone records, pictures, films and other visual equipment.

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 8–9.

The Working Party recognized the impossibility of isolating the public library from the world outside, particularly the rapidly developing field of education.[1]

Having traced the development of purpose through the British public library's first century and having noted parallel movements elsewhere, can it be claimed that the libraries of this country are "a dynamic part of community life"? Are they having an effect on society? Whether or not these questions can be answered affirmatively, there is no doubt that the library is a social organization and must affect persons and other institutions with whom it comes into contact. Equally, these persons and bodies should have an effect on the library. The results of library service in the community are then a coalescence of reciprocal relationships: the library is an influence and is itself influenced.

Any estimate of the nature and extent of the library's significance should be based, therefore, on these relationships between people and library, and before any start can be made to the study some account must be taken of the peculiarities of present-day conditions.

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 5–26.

5 *The Modern Social Background*

In the chapter "Question and Answer" of his autobiography Professor R. G. Collingwood wrote that "a logic in which the answers are attended to and the questions neglected is a false logic". "You cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements, even though he has spoken or written with perfect command of language and perfectly truthful intention. In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer."[1]

Similarly, a study of any public institution, such as the library, may reach false conclusions if its condition is surveyed without some consideration of the needs it is trying to satisfy, if the answer is expressed without some knowledge of the question.

This chapter is an attempt to indicate very briefly, and necessarily only partially, major aspects of present-day living which may influence the public library and its aims.

"The world is a world which is changing *all the time*, and changing with an ever-increasing and a bewildering rapidity . . . Our natural tendency is to educate our children for the world we have known and in which we have grown up, to educate them as though they were destined to be their own fathers or grandfathers. We are often urged to guard against this tendency, and to remember that the world of tomorrow will be a changed world from the world of today: that is true and important, but more true and more important is that it will be a *changing* world. . . ."[2]

Since these remarks were written the rate of change has been

[1] Collingwood, R. G., *An Autobiography* (1939), Chapter 5.
[2] Jacks, M. L., *Total Education* (1946), pp. 117–118.

even more bewildering, and herein lies the primary and immediate challenge to the public library. It must have flexibility: it must be adaptable to the changing world and must serve the current needs of its readers. It must also be ready to avail itself of the advantages of advancing knowledge and invention.

The most striking and disastrous feature of government in the last half-century has been the rise of political dictatorship. In the past twenty-five years the progressive disappearance of the traditional empires has led to the establishment of many independent states among the emergent nations: often this has been accompanied by conflict, either purely internal strife or externally inspired division.

Inevitably in countries ruled by dictators or absolute oligarchies freedom of thought has been discouraged and freedom of expression suppressed. It is almost equally inescapable that the governments in countries engaged in civil war must apply censorship to ideas that could threaten their power. Thus, in many cases, prescribed ideas and standardized instruction have been the mental bases of a monolithic regimentation backed by physical force.

Organized government demands from the people even in democracies a readiness to co-operate in the many disciplines of modern society: people cannot do just as they please if society is to work smoothly to communal advantage. Governments now demand this co-operation to the point that society is constantly aware of being managed, aware that the individual cannot always exercise his initiative. The result is that the opportunity for individualism is denied to many young people, who are thus resentful of the previous generation, which appears to impose this restriction.

It is indicative of the importance placed on books, authors, and libraries that they should have been early targets for the attention of the dictators and witch-hunting politicians. Censorship of literature was essential to ensure that the people should not make up their own minds, but should follow blindly the path laid down for them by their masters. Much has already been written attacking censorship and in defence of it, but a fully implemented prohibition of literature (for its subject-matter only) seems indefensible. A case *may* be made out for censorship which is dictated by others than the state government: it is in the disciplinary category of the parent-and-child relationship when the

censorship is dictated for the benefit of some one as yet unable to determine for himself the best course of action. If a Church or a political party decides that its members shall not read this or that, there is an element of freedom still left to the individual: he can if he so wishes leave the organization and read what he pleases. If the state prevents him from having access to a book, even if the book expresses a minority opinion, the state then is denying him his right to freedom of thought.

Such suppression is the first step to standardization. The latter is not, however, the monopoly of political dictatorships, but is inevitably invading all nations, for in democracies too progress has brought communal life to a complexity so great and ramified that personal freedom of action can no longer be regarded as synonymous with an absence of control by society over individual action. Social and economic life, as well as political government, needs planning. This planning may mean sacrifice of liberty in some cases, of financial gain in others, but it is an effort to put the welfare of the community above that of the individual. It is in these acts of "service above self" that the history of a nation's moral progress lies. Notwithstanding, such trends bring with them losses of free enterprise and initiative on the part of the individuals who are to derive the corporate benefit, and the persons charged with the planning must be of intellectual and ethical standards commensurate with the responsibility. Again the final burden will fall on the community which appoints them. The natural active and creative instincts of the individual must be canalized into vicarious lines of thought and work: instead of organizing the world for himself he must be content to fall in with the plans of those whose views most nearly coincide with his own, and by political means seek to have them implemented.

In countries where political thought is restricted or suppressed there can often be detected a compensatory increase in professional or cultural activity. In almost every country there appears to be a realization that progressively there is among the general public a feeling of impotence against the determined policies of any government however democratically elected. This realization has been followed widely by another characteristic of modern life, protest, and inevitably this has been made most often by the young people, particularly students.

Not only politically but also in their behaviour young people

have shown their rebellion against the previous generation more effectively than in the past. Protest has been made through colourful and eccentric dress, 'pop' art and music, through sensationalism and increasingly violent language and action in literature and the mass media.

Unification is inherent in the progress of communications too, and is to be seen in its lowest form in the stultifying influence of the cinema, which sets patterns of behaviour often quite unsuited for the country in which they are practised. But it is demonstrated also, more admirably, in the broadening effects of radio and television which enable listeners to enjoy concerts and other programmes which otherwise would be beyond them without the necessity of extensive travel. Improved transport has contributed to a more rapid exchange of information and opinion. Fifty years ago, when county libraries were first operated, a tendency to regard rural and urban readers as two quite different types was not regarded with surprise; yet the similarity of their reading taste has been quite proved, and is yet another indication of the influence of the closer communication links.

The present-day tendency towards standardization in many important fields of activity is but one of the challenges to the public library. It accentuates the need for the library's individualistic service. The latter is a safeguard against any totalitarian dictation of thought.

Since books, and the libraries which distribute them, are media for mass cultural diffusion, the other means of mass communication are of special concern in a study of libraries. These include radio and television, cinemas and newspapers. Because all of them can reach great numbers of people simultaneously, they are a threat to the individualistic oral tradition, for folklore, tales, and other talents become the common property of multitudes. This has its advantages, of course, but against them must be set the loss of personality. Again, standardization is the threat: what may have included interesting regional character is emasculated to ensure its easy understanding by the masses: the special peculiarities are neglected to render the material acceptable to the widest possible public, including those who could not have appreciated the local subtleties. The same depression of standards is to be found in the cinema, which caters for an intellectual common denominator fit for school-children. Efforts are made in British broadcasting to

maintain some recognition of local dialects, but the general trend must be towards their suppression in favour of a uniform language. Ogburn, the American sociologist, has already pointed out the concentration on fewer languages brought about by radio. Other aspects of the influence of radio which he has cited are these: isolated communities have been brought into closer contact with world events; and illiterates have been drawn back into community life.[1]

The latter is especially interesting for the librarian, since it is a means of overcoming a failure to which he is a party. Television, because of its closer approach to actuality, generally emphasizes the influences of sound radio. In the cinema too there is near-actuality which destroys the initiative of the audience. All three, sound and vision radio and the cinema, are creating non-participation in their functions: the audience can be quite passive and still be able to derive pleasure from them. In contrast, books demand active interest: they are mere records of words, which in turn give a representation of reality or of a story, but they are useless until the reader has participated by converting the printed page into thought.

The newspaper has this at least in common with the book: it needs some effort. Notwithstanding, the modern journals which command the widest circulation are those which give their message most cryptically, with the least effort. Thus, newspapers which rely on telegrammatic headlines, perhaps three or four in gradually diminishing size of type for each feature, followed by single-sentence paragraphs, and liberally illustrated, are now the most popular. It is easy to account for the rise of the strip-cartoon and the American 'comic'—they pander to laziness.

In extenuation it may be claimed that the pace of life has quickened and that time does not allow of the leisurely newspaper 'conferences' of a century ago, but this argument falls against the increased leisure of our times.

Some evidence of the influence of the newspaper can be found in the ready way in which editorial opinion or news-bias is passed on as their own by unthinking people. How often it happens that the answer to some inquiry is in almost the same words as the newspaper itself used! Further proof is to be seen in the results of advertising campaigns, and these are not confined to newspapers,

[1] Chase, Stuart, *The Proper Study of Mankind* (1950), p. 122.

but may enlist the whole range of means at their disposal, including radio and cinema. The injunction is put about that the reader or listener *must* wear this, he *must* eat this, *must* drink this, *must* use that. The remarkable result of these campaigns is that they do create large masses of people who are wearing, eating, drinking, and otherwise using the advertisers' products. Even without patently clamouring the message, the gramophone-record top-of-the pops business ensures a self-generating boom in some records. With the powerful hold of the mass media the advertisers or other promoters cannot fail with their messages. Thus Lennon, one of the Beatles, could claim they were more popular than Jesus, and with some justification. Advertising on the scale at present practised is bound to effect a degree of uniformity of habit. The commercial importance of advertising to newspapers is now so great that the news and editorial aspects are now almost subjugated to this and accounts for the declining quality of one-time great papers.

An unintentional contribution to uniformity is made by the attempts to copy notabilities' behaviour as depicted in the Press. The cinema and television do the same thing; for there are many people who imagine that they would like the bright life portrayed. Their ambition is to emulate film or pop stars, and they are prepared to spend a great deal on copying their clothes or trifling details of their personal behaviour. Because of the benefits which can be reaped from this practice many commercial concerns make a point of catering for the demand for items said to be used by film stars, sportsmen, or radio commentators, all of which contributes to another aspect of our times, the diminishing social differences between what were once quite clearly defined economic classes.

The governing class is disappearing, and the economic classes are to some degree being replaced by political and cultural gradations. There can be no doubt that the existence in the past of distinct social and economic differences has injected into the mass of people an ambition to climb the ladder of financial or intellectual achievement. As Hole expressed it a century ago, "Deficient as the manufacturing towns are in educational facilities, the presence of a middle and upper class helps to keep up a higher tone of intellectual life even among those who share but little of its advantages."[1]

[1] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 53.

In a community of social equals it becomes more than ever necessary to provide liberal education through libraries, which can so well supply the great diversity of cultural channels hitherto maintained by the cosmopolitan interests of the aristocracy and upper classes. The library can have some significance where the social role of these classes is declining, since it can be an alternative medium of cultural diffusion. Furthermore, the library, operating through books and other printed material, can achieve much greater success than did the individual oral contacts, since it not only bridges time, but also space: the individual could not hope to bring back, say, from abroad the intellectual riches of a country, but a mere sample of them. The library, well stocked with suitable books, could go very much farther towards a presentation of the whole picture.

While the diminution in economic inequalities may continue, there still remains the great variety of human talents, the considerable differences between one man's capabilities and another's. The librarian, in maintaining his guard against standardization in the majority of human activities, must equally beware of allowing himself to be deceived into regarding the community as an entirely homogeneous mass.

In the United States social equality was one of the objectives of the early public libraries. In Britain the libraries were an effort to equalize social differences by giving the working classes the same facilities as those enjoyed by the wealthier members of the community. As a result higher levels of society in this country were inclined to regard the free libraries as beneath their dignity. The changing attitude to social and economic differences and the lessening in these differences are now attracting public-library readers from all walks of life.

Another characteristic of mid-twentieth century Britain is the creation of the Welfare State, which plays a part in some of the changes just noted. National insurance against ill-health, unemployment, and want should increasingly relieve people of worries which might have beset them in the earlier part of the century, and with this relief should come a readier willingness to undertake mental activity of a pleasanter kind. Nevertheless, whatever the cause, society today is more materialist than ever before: it is acquisitive and reckless. Most specifically this is to be seen in the gambling boom.

It is only with the achievement of some degree of social security that a man can have that peace of mind which leaves him free for the contemplation of matters less concerned with his material condition; he is free to consider the wider aspects of public affairs; he is free from the influence of the unscrupulous who might, in the past, have used his misfortunes to their advantage, on the one hand to achieve cheap labour, or on the other to have stirred up revolutionary troubles. But (as will be seen later) the old worries have been replaced by new.

The excellent social services are the culmination of many years of gradual improvement, and the public library and education are examples of the long, slow development. One is tempted to wonder why the library remains the Cinderella when consideration is given to the handsome recognition granted to the other services. Education, for instance, has been raised to a fitting place. It is compulsory for all to spend ten years at school, and when that time is completed fine advanced facilities are provided, even for those who leave school to take up work at the earliest possible opportunity. There is more encouragement to study after formal education is ended.

The curricula of our schools have been so altered in recent years that they have gone very far from the limited 'three R's' objective. It is against these changed school programmes that the significance of the public library must be viewed. There is an element of tolerance and freedom both in the mode of teaching and in the subjects taught. It is now regarded as improper for the teacher to attempt too much influence in the approach to any topic, especially if this has any moral aspects. This attitude of neglecting deliberate moral training for social conduct is by no means universal in the teaching profession, but in the wider field free inquiry and empirical studies are encouraged. An obvious example is to be found in the treatment of history or other national material. No attempt is being made here to estimate the value of the new attitudes and methods.

In his *Total Education* M. L. Jacks writes: "*Culture* to an Englishman has traditionally meant English culture, to a Frenchman, French culture, to an American, American culture, and the boys and girls in these countries have been educated in that tradition. If they are to be educated for the modern world, they must see culture, not as an exclusively national possession, but as

a common sub-stratum of civilization underlying an infinite variety of expressions: they must be taught to recognize the differing effects of physical environment on culture, and of culture on personality, the divergent views of history to which these differing effects give rise, the unfamiliar social institutions and social practices which are their natural consequence, the strange ways of life which have sprung from man's efforts to co-operate with nature in strange climatic conditions—and above all to recognize that these are all branches and off-shoots from one cultural stem: they must indeed be taught to take cultural variation for granted, and not to deny its claim to be cultural because it is a variation. Education for such a world, for its oneness embracing its infinite variety, will mean the inculcation of a new broad-mindedness and a new tolerance, and this must be a deliberate element in any education calling itself complete." There must be education to create "the whole man for the whole world", and "his opinion must be fluid, but his principles must be firm", with "elasticity of the former and the strength of the latter".[1] Independent activity is at last replacing submissive receptivity, as Herbert Spencer had hoped.

Such an education cannot be taught within the walls of school, but must draw on life, and, since the child's own experience is limited, he will seek his guidance from others and from literature. Any bias which may be injected into his guidance by others the library can counteract by its impartiality.

The tendency to allow inquiry and experiment to replace the dogmatic moral teaching of the past may in some way be linked with the decline in authority of the Church, and there can be no doubt that the influence of the latter has decreased greatly. In the same way there would appear to be some connection between the new freedom and the attenuated ties of family life. Young people are now far readier to establish their homes separately from their parents than ever previously. This and other factors are obviously linked with the greater social permissiveness of today.

The modest, but very often useful, pastimes of the past are rapidly being superseded by sports and entertainments where true participation has been supplanted by passive attendance at performances by others—*e.g.*, the football matches and cinema shows attended by millions every week. There must be doubt of

[1] *Op. cit.* (1946), pp. 117–118.

the value of such modern pastimes. They cannot be called recreations, since they do not re-create. If there is any participation by the spectator it is so vicarious as to be negligible.

The craving for this type of entertainment and the lack of social facilities in the country are inducements to young people to leave rural areas. It is in any case sociologically inevitable that people gather together in larger units, and the problem of towns of inflated population already occupies the attention of national planners. Even where large cities, such as London and New York, are being drained of some of their excess of residents, the latter are still being housed in towns, the 'satellites'. There is still no de-urbanization.

The 1939–45 War was responsible for much movement of population, both among the towns of the British Isles and among the countries of Europe, with the result that many people are now living in areas far different from those in which they were reared. Furthermore, in Britain there has been an intake of immigrants from the Commonwealth greater than ever before. The United States, because of its size and its mixed races, has experienced this condition for many years, and it has been the aim of American public libraries to develop homogeneity among foreign-born citizens and the native Americans; this applies generally to refugees, displaced persons, and other prospective candidates for naturalization.

Not only has there been great movement of people; there is also taking place a great change in the constitution of the population. Because of better health the expectation of life is increasing, but the birth-rate is not keeping pace with the increasing number of old folk. The result is that the ratio of old to young is mounting rapidly.

Improved employment conditions have included shorter working hours for many, leaving them added spare time to be occupied. A century ago Hole expressed pleasure that Saturday half-days, then becoming general, might be applied to various profitable pastimes, including the use of the mechanics' institutes. The half-days have become whole days, but the marked increase has not been in serious studies but in crime, gambling, and other occupations of doubtful value. The leisure, instead of encouraging a quieter mode of life, has been utilized in pastimes the pace of which is ever-quickening. It is difficult, however, to estimate when

the pace of life becomes *too* fast. "The race of life moves too swiftly, there are too many distractions, and there are too many calls upon us in the busy world for one to find leisure for more than taking our literature as we take extract of meat—in small nutritious doses . . . It is an age of literature in nutshells. All this, I venture to think, points significantly to the fact that we do not live in a reading age in the true sense of the word. Undoubtedly, more people read than formerly; general education is far more widely diffused; but we live too fast, as a nation, to find time to read deeply. How frequently we hear it said, 'I have no time for reading'; and it is frequently true."[1] But these remarks were made in the Presidential Address to the Library Association in 1890!

The United Kingdom, and, indeed, the whole world, stricken within the course of thirty years by two devastating wars, and burdened with crippling precautions against further strife, cannot fail to have felt the moral effect of such events. Economic effects are obvious, but the other, social, evils arising from war and war-preparedness are more subtle. The hazards of war, its adventures and apparent glamour, are a very strong incentive to the young and inexperienced to disregard its awful consequences. In war not only are the resources of a country ruthlessly dissipated, but its talents are trained in fields which contribute little to the lasting benefits of peace. The finer arts are the first casualties of any war, and reason gives way to recklessness, chance, and careless excitement. Morality too deteriorates in circumstances where supervision of a man's behaviour by his family and acquaintances is no longer a restraint.

Thus the War and its legacy are to blame for some, at least, of the crime, gambling, and breakdown of family life. Nevertheless, National Service had some benefits to confer, and one such is that it focused attention on the problem of illiteracy in this country. Serious though this is in Britain, it is infinitesimal in comparison with the difficulties of the world as a whole. More than half of the world's people are illiterate, and the calamity is alleviated only by the knowledge that countries such as Britain and the United States are not prepared to tolerate a continuation of this state of affairs, which carries with it all the dangers of social backwardness and economic instability.

So complex is the social position now that it is impossible to

[1] Thompson, Sir E. Maunde, in *The Library*, vol. ii (1890), p. 372.

generalize on the mental attitude of the whole nation, but it can be said that, being kept closely in touch with world events, the man in the street carries a heavier burden of worry than his ancestors. The instability of employment and doubts about economic security have been replaced by a concern for the future not only of his own family or nation, but of countries and people at the far ends of the earth. As the result of radio and other effective communications he cannot dispose of the worry for a day or two, but is haunted from one news-bulletin to the next, or in times of crisis from news-flash to news-flash. Man is less of an island than ever before, and is truly involved in mankind: he must carry the burdens as well as enjoy the fruits of all mankind's labours.

The other mental attitude now so common is credulity. In the short span of half a century such changes have taken place that no man could have dreamed. Consequently people are ready for any new fantasy, ready to accept it as true without the doubts which are essential to true participation in scientific progress.

In fine, the major characteristics of contemporary life are these: rapid and unceasing change; a clamour for novelty; unification, controls, and planning; protest; quick and effective means of individual and mass communication; diminution of social differences among the economic classes; wider and better social services, with decreased working hours and a proportionate increase in leisure time; improved schooling and further encouragement to study after formal education has ended; the decline of the influence of the Church and of family ties; permissiveness; the movement and changing nature of the population; illiteracy; and a community burdened with worries for the future, but whose credulity is no longer strained by anything, no matter how fantastic.

These are the conditions to which the library must adjust its purposes, and for which it may need to create new objectives. It is against the problems of these circumstances that the library must measure its service, and for which that service must be designed.

6 *The British Public Library Today*

The first comment on such a topic as the British public library must be the qualification which accompanies most generalizations: there is no such individual unit as the 'British Public Library', and accordingly the remarks which follow are based on the impression made on the present writer by the libraries of which he has knowledge or experience. Thus the picture will be one of a composite character, often omitting the best or worst of any aspect.

Public libraries are devices for putting books into action, for associating readers and books; they build up collections of books (by a process of selection, perhaps mainly of elimination) to some prescribed pattern, and they organize the books in such a manner that they are readily available to the readers. This chapter is an effort to indicate how this is done in the United Kingdom.

It was as recently as 1963 that the township of Mountain Ash, in Glamorgan, adopted the Public Libraries Acts; until then there had been no local-government-operated library service in the town. In Whitehead, in Northern Ireland, it was not until 1959 that public-library service became possible.

By the time the Public Libraries and Museums Act was passed in 1964 the whole area of the United Kingdon was within the purview of a library authority of one kind or another. As noted earlier, this Act also places the responsibility for public-library service standards in the hands of the Secretary of State at the Department of Education and Science. Although there is responsibility for supervision of the service by the Central Government there is no direct financial aid from the Exchequer specifically for libraries.

Libraries in England and Wales have benefited from the rate support grants effective since 1967; Scottish libraries operated by the education authorities received support from the grants made to

these authorities from 1919 to 1959, and since then have been regarded as services to enjoy part of the general grant to the education authorities; but in Britain there are no government grants to public libraries.

The United Kingdom is exceptional in this because state aid for libraries is common elsewhere throughout the world. In the Republic of Ireland there is provision for financial aid by virtue of a Ministry for Local Government Circular letter issued in November 1969. In the United States federal funds are available for library-development programmes under the provisions of the Library Services and Construction Act 1964. In the Scandinavian countries state aid to libraries is of long standing, in Norway spasmodically since 1836, continually since 1876, in Denmark since 1882, and in Sweden since 1905.

Public-library service in the United Kingdom in 1970 was operated by 461 library authorities, compared with 580 in 1955. This number is likely to be reduced to less than half under proposals for local-government reform in 1974. The present authorities, which reflect the current diversity of local government, operate in towns and counties which vary in population from a few thousands to over a million. The government of the libraries usually lies in the hands of a committee appointed by the local authority. A relic of the pre-1964 legislation is found in the freedom given to the authorities, who may appoint a committee specifically for library purposes or, in the case of counties, leave the library in the care of the education committee. With recent examination of the management of local-authority functions, some authorities have reduced the number of service committees, with the result that some libraries are now managed by committees responsible for other duties as well. Thus in some places the public-library services are to be found in the care of "Amenities", "Entertainments", even "Watch, Weights and Measures, Market, Baths, Town Hall, Libraries and Art Gallery" Committees as well as, more reasonably, the Education Committee and the independent Library Committee.

These committees may delegate some of their work to sub-committees—*e.g.*, Finance, Staffing, etc.—who determine detail, while higher policy is retained as the major function of the main committee. Nevertheless there is a continuing process of recognizing the professional skills of the librarian and the decreasing

need by the committee to supervize detail; this is leading to a decrease in the number of subcommittees and even in the number of meetings held by library committees themselves. Financial control of the libraries always rests finally, of course, with the library authority.

The librarian, though nominally only the chief executive, generally initiates consideration of development projects and steers the committee through professional details; it is characteristic of the library, as of many other social institutions, that the executive is also called upon to muster all the arguments of policy for consideration by the non-professional committee, and often finally to determine the policy itself.

The major factor in the expansion or limitation of a service is its finance. In the financial year 1969–70 a total of some £54,000,000 was spent on British public libraries. The expenditure may indicate the significance attached to libraries by the authorities. It may suggest that, in some quarters at least, the case of public libraries is not being advanced with sufficient vigour by the librarians. In many cases low expenditure on libraries is the result of the rate limitations which applied in England and Wales until 1919, in Northern Ireland until 1946, and in Scottish burghs until 1955. Just as often, alas, it is proof that local authorities do not yet believe library service to be indispensable, essential to a living community.

This limiting influence of finance on culture may be explained by the ready understanding by councils and committees of simple economics without the wider realization of the sociological background against which the expenditure must be considered, although this is not so serious a problem as it was in the inter-war period. Although many library committees are fortunate in having among their members men and women of intellectual ability there is limited evidence among councils of an appreciation of the fullest potentialities of library service, and in many cases the library committees are used as a probationary testing ground where new councillors have the opportunity of finding their feet on a 'minor' committee. The average cost of public libraries throughout the United Kingdom in the mid-1950's was about 5*s*. per person per year. In 1969–70 this had risen to almost 20*s*. per head, and inevitably the encouragement of the new legislation may continue to increase this figure.

While expenditure may provide a rough guide to the standard of a library service it cannot be used as the only measure. Financial strength must be supported by professional care and discrimination in the choice of material used to advance the cause of the library. It would be pointless, for example, to expect a council to spend substantial sums on material of literary or educational value and to attempt to justify this expenditure on the grounds only of public entertainment. Professional skill should provide books on the widest possible basis, and this may well be supported by equally wide advice and help to the community in the use of that material to the general advantage.

Generally, in public-library expenditure, between 20 and 30 per cent will be for books, between 40 and 50 per cent on salaries, and the rest on building maintenance and administration. In towns the average allocation to administration and building maintenance has in the past been much higher than in the counties, but more recognition has been given in recent years by county services to the need for providing adequate buildings, and the expenditure in this field has increased substantially.

In the past, to some extent because of their more recent inauguration and because of their initial promotion by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, there was an inclination to try to persuade county-library authorities that library service could be provided very cheaply, and at one time Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Mitchell, Secretary of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, suggested that a rate of a halfpenny in the pound would be adequate. Having depended to a great extent on renting buildings at a very low annual cost, or even of using school buildings at no cost at all, and having depended to a great extent on voluntary assistance, the county-library service had in its first quarter-century all the appearances of being a poor relation to the town libraries. Inevitably the readers in rural areas realized that the situation was intolerable and naturally demanded the same level of service as they saw enjoyed by the town reader.

Not only in the county libraries but in the town libraries efforts are being made to increase the proportion of qualified staff, and recently this has been an uphill task because of the expansion of all kinds of library. The public library has for a very long time recruited the vast majority of budding librarians. It has given them a short preliminary training, after which they have undergone

professional education, and when they have qualified professionally a great many of them have left the public-library service for the newly developed specialized libraries.[1]

There are more than eleven thousand public service points in buildings varying from ramshackle huts shared with other organizations to the fine libraries recently built in some of the cities and smaller towns. Recent examples are to be found in London, Luton, Norwich, Bradford, and in the progressive counties where hundreds of new buildings have been erected since 1960. It would be invidious to cite any particular county; some have achieved excellence in architectural presentation along with good library functional planning, whereas others have stressed the library aspect to the point of architectural austerity. Somewhere between the extremes often are to be found excellent functional buildings and the worst of the institutional type characteristic of the late Victorian Carnegie benefactions. In addition, service is now offered through more than five hundred mobile units touring the rural areas of the counties and the new housing districts of the towns. These vehicles operate on planned routes, regularly visiting thousands of service points throughout the United Kingdom, usually weekly or fortnightly. In addition the public libraries maintain services in some 24,000 educational institutions in the United Kingdom.

There is, however, considerable variation between the service given from these buildings and mobile libraries, because the term 'service point' covers the central reference libraries of the great cities equally with the box of fifty books deposited in a school and called a 'centre' by some county libraries.

One extreme of library 'service' was until 1967 represented by the Tickhill Public Library in Yorkshire. This was a building maintained by the local urban district council following its donation to the town by a local benefactor, Henry Shaw. Although the local council adopted the Public Libraries Acts in 1908 with the promise of this gift in mind, no new books were ever bought, and the only service given to the town was that provided, owing to a misunderstanding, by the West Riding County Library in 1925–26. Sporadic discussion over forty years culminated in the merger of the

[1] Department of Education and Science, Library Advisory Council (England), Library Advisory Council (Wales), *A Report on the Supply and Training of Librarians* (1968), pp. 24, 42.

Tickhill Urban District Library into the County Library area in 1967.

Most town libraries give a fundamental provision consisting of a home lending service, a children's section, and a reference department, which often embodies an information bureau using external as well as library resources. County libraries, by force of geographical circumstances, may provide all these, but face great problems in the organization of the last-named. The larger public-library systems generally have additional departments and services, including the following: commercial, serving the business community; technical, for engineers and industrial scientists; newspapers and magazines; illustrations; music, which may include a library of gramophone records; films and slides; photo-copying departments for duplicates of extracts or other documents requested by readers or other libraries; and archives.

It has been one of the calamities of the public library in this country that its value has not been proclaimed more loudly and its services financed more adequately in time to prevent the removal of some of its important functions to other more specialized bodies. After the 1914–18 War the information needs of the developing industries were obvious, and the Library Association failed to persuade the Government to subsidize public libraries as agencies for the National Lending Library which they proposed. On the other hand the Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee advised: "The existing provision of technical libraries is, however, not fully utilised, nor is it adequate to meet the needs of a great industrial and commercial country. In the case of general libraries the unit of organization and administration is the local authority, in the case of the technical library system it should be the industry. In many instances, however, a library might cover a group of allied trades. This is not to suggest that public libraries should confine themselves to the provision of general literature. On the contrary, it is important that they should contain an adequate supply of books dealing with the various trades carried on in the district. But a comprehensive policy of technical library provision must be arranged industry by industry. It should clearly be closely related to both technical education and research."[1] The result was that information services were established with state aid in new research organizations attached to industry.

[1] Ministry of Reconstruction, Adult Education Committee, *Third Interim Report, Libraries and Museums* (1919), p. 10.

Again immediately before the 1939–45 War when local information bureaux were being established a great opportunity faced alert public libraries, but the progressive social services were chosen by many authorities in preference to their libraries to take over the citizens' advice bureaux in many places. Similarly the failure of some libraries to demonstrate their effectiveness previously led many local authorities who wished to preserve their archives collections to establish entirely new archives departments rather than entrust the libraries with them.

In the same way poor technical services provided in public libraries by their default provided the strongest arguments for the establishment of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology.

The children's services are usually provided through a separate department in the library's own buildings and by deposit collections in the schools of the local education authority. Although in the county libraries there has been a general recognition, perhaps again because of the historical circumstances, that formal education and the library must work hand in hand, up to the present time the liaison between public libraries and schools has been far too loose.

It is an encouraging aspect of library development, however, that there is a growing tendency towards co-operation with educational, social, and other cultural agencies. In this lies the germ of realization that the library is not limited in its work to its own building, to its stock or staff. Because it is a social institution which will affect people's whole lives it is imperative that it should permeate all cultural activities. While this was fairly true in the 1950's, the Roberts Report of 1959 and the new legislation of 1964 made it quite clear that the library had to go out towards its readers, abandoning its traditional reluctance for strong outward-looking public relations.

Among the authorities to follow this policy and which have notable programmes of cultural activities centred on their libraries are those in Camden, Dudley, Swindon, and Rotherham. It is the practice in many libraries to afford hospitality to literary, local-history and antiquarian, art, and music societies by providing accommodation for meetings, exhibitions, and other programmes as well as by offering publicity often supported by special library displays. In some larger towns theatres and cinemas are included

in the library building, affording appropriate accommodation for professional presentation of drama and films.

Not only in the cultural field must the library be outgoing: many people are prevented by physical handicaps from attending the library's service points. Any library service they can have must be provided in their own homes or in the institutions where they are confined. Many public libraries provide 'housebound' services whereby, either directly or with the aid of voluntary bodies, books and other materials are taken to the sick and the old as well as to those confined in prisons and borstals.

According to various assessments one person in three or four uses the public-library service of this country, but even this figure seems fairly optimistic. It may be true that one in three or four people is registered as a library reader, but this by no means proves that one in three is using the library all the time. Equally many people not registered as readers use the information facilities of the library service.

Although there is still in the public mind the vague notion that public libraries acquire their books by gift or purchase from the authors or publishers, in fact they buy their stocks retail from booksellers and specialist library suppliers, who all, by a special arrangement between publishers and booksellers with the libraries, grant a discount of 10 per cent to public libraries with book expenditure exceeding £100 per annum. In order to obtain this discount the public libraries must also undertake to abide by the conditions laid down by the so-called library licence, the main clause of which demands that there must be public access to these books. The Net Book Agreement and consequently the licensing arrangement were the subject of scrutiny by the Restrictive Practices Court in 1962, and the current arrangements were upheld as being in the best interests of the public. (The Court proceedings are dealt with in detail in *Books are Different*, by R. E. Barker and G. R. Davies, published in 1966.) The decision was confirmed by the Court again in 1967.

The method of selecting books for addition to public libraries' stocks varies considerably throughout the country, from the autocratic choice of the chief librarian to the clumsy and dilatory consideration by whole committees, from the fleeting glance through book-jackets carried around by representatives of various booksellers to the studied examination of reviews, bibliographies,

and even the books themselves. Between these extremes lies the effective means of acquiring the most suitable stock for the libraries with suggestions from committee members, departmental heads, branch librarians and readers, with book conferences among the staff and a modified combination of all these devices. It is now normal practice to encourage readers' requests, and it is usual for libraries to purchase without question any important works not in stock and suggested by readers. If this is not done the librarian will normally explain precisely why the choice was not acceptable for purchase because, of course, in some cases books will not be available for purchase at all, and these may have to be borrowed through inter-lending machinery.

In order to exploit their stocks to the full many public libraries issue bulletins or co-operate with the local Press in issuing lists of their books. Although it is not so common nowadays some of the larger libraries still publish printed catalogues of their accessions, usually in volumes covering two or three years. The use of computers may well lead to a revival of the printed catalogue.

At the time of the inauguration of public libraries in 1850 the first Public Libraries Act made no legal provision for the purchase of books at all. It was hoped by the sponsors of public libraries that kind philanthropists would provide all the stock necessary. Donations of books are still welcomed by librarians provided that there are no conditions laid down with the gifts. This means that the librarian can take the useful books as best befits his plan for the library. (Just how difficult it is to operate the library where the librarian is inundated with unsuitable books may be seen in some of the libraries of the British Commonwealth which have been largely dependent in the past on donations. Even now some rely on the gifts of the Ranfurly Scheme which at least sends worthwhile books unwanted in this country to overseas libraries.) Librarians recognize that if freedom to reject gifts is denied these may become a nuisance and the library would be better without them in most cases. Book donations are relatively unimportant in the older public libraries, but in the county libraries, most of them not fifty years old, the gifts can often provide material unlikely to be acquired in any other way—*e.g.*, in the field of local material and important general works now out of print.

Inevitably in order to supply the needs of its readers with books at short notice the large public library will duplicate many

titles. One difficulty arises when the short-term demand has been satisfied, and that is the storage or disposal of the additional copies of such titles. It is now common practice for a library to offer to other libraries any copies not required after the first major demand has been satisfied. The same applies to other books to be discarded from stock which still have a useful life. In addition to the friendly, direct policy of co-operation pursued by many librarians in this field, machinery exists in the National Central Library in London to use books no longer required by the library which purchased them. This is the British National Book Centre, which handles only a small proportion of the books themselves but arranges for their exchange. Another aspect of this disposal of unwanted books lies in the field of subject specialization because there has now been organized throughout this country a system whereby most public libraries specialize in some particular field in order to ensure that every field is covered thoroughly by some library or other. It is becoming common practice therefore for a library to offer redundant books to the specializing library.

One of the demands made in the report[1] of the Working Party on Standards which studied English and Welsh public libraries in 1961 was that they should ensure that the public is kept abreast of information on books, and Section 7 of the Public Libraries Act 1964 lays a duty on public-library authorities of providing advice on bibliographical and other information required by persons using the public library. It is surprising that there are still public libraries which do not subscribe to the British National Bibliography, which lists, with negligible exceptions, all the British books published each week. With its regular cumulations it is thus an invaluable guide for any library. In the more backward libraries there is still too much reliance on readers' requests for books instead of forward planning of the purchase of book-stocks, which is made easier by the now considerable advance publicity issued by publishers.

Without adequate book guidance the readers' opinion of library stocks may not be as informed as it should be, but many do not give them unqualified praise; on the contrary, it would appear from many comments that few libraries have any suitable books at all! Having regard for the circumstances, there is still something

[1] Ministry of Education, Working Party on Standards of Public Library Service in England and Wales, *Report* (1962).

amiss in this situation: it is true that either the libraries are failing to add the right material or they are not justifying their stock appropriately to their readers, or they are not helping to show the readers its value. Limitations of finance and the diversity of aims (to try to satisfy the serious student at the 'popular' reader's expense, or vice versa) can enforce compromise, and it is not surprising to find many falling between two stools, their book-stocks scarcely distinguishable from the collections in the old cheap subscription libraries.

The stock of United Kingdom public libraries now (1971) exceeds 110,000,000 volumes. Some 650,000,000 books are issued annually, and in most libraries about two-thirds of these at least are fiction, but this is a figure which varies widely throughout the country, and it must further be remembered that again this is a purely quantitative measurement. Much valuable library work—*e.g.*, information, bibliographical, technical, and commercial services—is not represented in issues, and the reading of a single treatise may be the equivalent in time, energy, and value of a dozen light novels. Notwithstanding, it is difficult to assess the effect of service purely from numbers of books issued even when the figures are minutely analysed. Most public librarians will be able to quote instances of single issues, the importance of which cannot be shown by numerical statistics.

After providing the stock the libraries' next aim is to organize it for action: their function is primarily to make their stocks available in an arrangement which is readily comprehensible by the readers and which ensures the greatest use of the material.

The resources of individual libraries are usually indicated by a catalogue of one sort or another. Card and sheaf systems of cataloguing have mostly taken the place of the printed catalogue, yet while these have many admirable technical features, very few readers make a regular practice of consulting them, perhaps because of an unfamiliarity with their form. The failure to enlist the co-operation of the readers in using a vital tool of library service is regrettable, and emphasizes the need for the bulletins and book-lists mentioned earlier, for special exhibitions, and for alert staffs.

It is general practice to allow the readers access to as much of the stock as they can be expected to use conveniently (though this generalization is subject to many exceptions, such as the reserve

reference and lending stocks of larger systems). In view of this 'open access' the books are normally arranged on the shelves in subject order. The most commonly used arrangement in the United Kingdom is the Dewey Decimal Classification, so called because of the division of book subjects into nine main groups with a tenth for general works, with each of these ten main classes further divided into ten smaller groups, and so on. Again, the technicality of the system appears to be too much for most readers, who may be able to cope with an arrangement into ten main classes, but who find further subdivisions too complicated.

The libraries' provision, as noted earlier, is not confined to the supply of books, but extends to information on them too. It is natural, therefore, that large libraries at least are always ready to provide reading lists on request from readers who are following some specific line of study. Co-operation among librarians in this field is well exemplified in, among others, the fine series of reading guides, issued by the County Libraries Group of the Library Association, which covers diverse topics—such as religion, theatre, education, and agriculture.

Next, or possibly equal, in importance to the library's stock is its staff. In public libraries there are two quite different types of duties to be performed, the professional and the routine. It is a pity that this distinction has not been more forcibly stressed when staff have been recruited for British libraries. In progressive libraries this division of duty has been recognized and acted upon, but too often the 'librarian' of small libraries is a mere caretaker with a meagre knowledge of books and library resources.

One commentator on British libraries has written: "Unfortunately for the development of libraries themselves, and for the prestige of librarians, the 'men behind the counter' have not until recently been distinguished either for their general culture or their special interest in books." The public libraries "are growing faster than those who administer them".[1] This must have contributed to the notion, still widely held, that a librarian is in fact only a man behind the counter handing out books. The chance to economize by using uneducated labour was not missed in the past by many parsimonious library authorities, and to some extent the predominance of young girls at the public contact points has left an image difficult to eradicate. Not only is there the hint that any

[1] Wellard, J. H., *The Public Library comes of Age* (1940), pp. 39 and 45.

young person can do a librarian's work but also that working in a library is an occupation for women.[1] Britain is by no means the only country where these views are common.

Even now, despite the professional progress and the increased availability of qualified staff, there persists the tendency in smaller libraries to give appointments to the unqualified local candidate rather than to the more efficient outsider, though happily this does not apply so commonly in chief appointments. Every community needs specialist organization of its library facilities; the latter need modifications to suit local conditions. Often it is argued that local knowledge and experience especially qualify a man for the post of librarian, but the state of libraries where senior posts have been a matter of succession regardless of qualification suggests otherwise. An outsider with a sound knowledge of general library practice and theory can usually assess the community's requirement more objectively than the local man with his natural prejudices and insular outlook.

Happily the 1960's have been in Britain the most rapid period of professional progress in libraries. The Library Association's Education Officer wrote in 1962 of "A New Look in Librarians' Education", and noted that it "implies that recruits to the profession need to undergo two processes: education in librarianship; and training in a library. It also implies that by no means every recruit to the staff of a library is a recruit to the profession. The man's (and employer's) world of the 1920's and 1930's laid emphasis on 'hoisting oneself by one's own shoelaces'. This is a different world in which we live today: one in which women's ways of thought have more influence than formerly, and the New Look recognizes this."[2]

Appropriately in the same year the Library Association published a descriptive list of the duties performed in libraries with the purpose of distinguishing the professional from the non-professional.[3]

The interest of the Department of Education and Science in the supply and training of librarians was reflected in 1968 with the

[1] *Cf.* Roe, E., *Librarian, social class and masculinity*, in *Australian Library Journal* (September 1964), p. 117.

[2] Palmer, B. I., in *Library Association Record* (November 1962), p. 421.

[3] Library Association, *Professional and Non-professional Duties in Libraries* (1962).

publication of a report[1] on the subject by the Library Advisory Councils of England and Wales, while the more specialized needs of staff in scientific and technological library and information work were dealt with in a report[2] commissioned by the Office for Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI).

Librarians for most British library posts of importance are now selected by the local council or its committee with some attention to professional qualification. Most now have specified that no-one who is not a Fellow or Associate of the Library Association shall be appointed. Only in Northern Ireland has the central government laid down rules concerning librarians' appointments, and there a Statutory Order rules that only persons holding a certificate of fellowship or association may be appointed as librarians in counties and county boroughs. Few libraries have adopted special aptitude tests in their recruitment, though health tests are now required for superannuation purposes.

Staffs usually work between thirty-five and forty hours per week, a disadvantage in many libraries being the need to work 'broken time'—*e.g.*, morning and evening, with afternoon off-duty. Salaries for junior staff were, in 1971, generally about £13–£14 per week at the age of eighteen. Chief librarians' salaries varied from below £2000 to over £6000 per annum.

The Library Association is the organization responsible for professional standards in the United Kingdom, and it maintains a register of chartered librarians, who are either Associates or Fellows—*i.e.*, A.L.A. or F.L.A. The former are deemed to be capable of taking senior posts in most libraries, while the Fellowship is recognized as the qualification for the highest grades in the largest systems. Total British public-library staffs number more than 24,000, 14,300 of them members of the Library Association, of whom 12 per cent are Fellows and 32 per cent are Associates.

Entrants to the profession who intend to qualify are either graduates or persons who have the General Certificate of Education with passes in at least five subjects, of which one must be in English Language and two at Advanced level, or an equivalent

[1] Department of Education and Science, Library Advisory Council (England), Library Advisory Council (Wales), *A Report on the Supply and Training of Librarians* (1968).

[2] Schur, H., and Saunders, W. L., *Education and Training for Scientific and Technological Library and Information Work* (1968).

standard of educational qualification. These entrants may go straight from university or school to a school of librarianship or may choose to take a junior appointment in a library, going to the school of librarianship after about a year's experience. Some libraries offer special training schemes to entrants choosing the latter course; these schemes include the payment of salary during attendance on the courses at the schools of librarianship and may require the student to return for a specified further term of service with the same employer.

There are fifteen schools of librarianship in the United Kingdom in universities, polytechnics, colleges of commerce, and technical colleges. Examination qualifications in librarianship include those of the Library Association—that is, the Post-graduate Professional Examinations open only to graduates attending schools of librarianship and the Parts I and II Professional Examinations open to all members whether full-time students or not; some universities and polytechnics offer first degrees, post-graduate diplomas, or higher degrees in librarianship.

The Library Association introduced in 1969 a special scheme for the registration as qualified librarians of more mature (over thirty-two years of age) members of the profession who satisfy some prescribed training and other requirements. Further details of the regulations governing the Library Association professional examinations and admission to the register of chartered librarians as well as information on the facilities for study and training for the examinations are to be found in the Association's *Year Book* or in the annual *Student's Handbook*.

Until quite recently the subjects covered by examinations in librarianship have been nearly all of a technical nature with little attention to the philosophy of the work. This may indicate that the self-satisfaction of the profession has been at last disturbed, that the lack of curiosity concerning its fundamentals is disappearing, and that librarians have realized they have not yet fully established their significance in society and that they cannot afford to be content with their previous mechanical attempts to satisfy immediate and vociferous demands while ignoring other pressing problems. Whatever the reason for the past neglect, there is no doubt that it has been harmful to the profession, whose status is bound to be judged in some degree by the intellectual investigations, the questionings and probings, of its leaders and its students.

Another result of this feature of the library service is that there is a tendency to elevate its mechanics above their proper place, above books themselves, and, even more deplorably, above the readers. Without the humanist attitude the staff of a library cannot expect to fulfil the duty of ensuring the fullest service to the individual readers; only by a close study of their personal needs can there be any prospect of doing this. It is chastening to realize that no other social service of the present time takes so little interest in the personality of its clients and offers such impersonal facilities. It is true that many library staffs are courteous and attentive in their manner, but this is far from being the same as giving a personal service.

There is a need to know the community served by the library, to seek out adequately the occupations, interests, and requirements of its inhabitants. (There is much to be said for the practice in Northern Moravia where the regional library organizers are required not only to supervize the branch operations in each village but also to spend several days per year deliberately meeting people in the village streets to familiarize themselves with the communities.)

Whatever may be said of British libraries and their staffs, it cannot be denied that they have been an example to the world in their efforts to ensure co-operation among themselves to utilize to the full libraries' stocks. It was early recognized that there are limits to the resources which can be made available by a self-contained library, but only with the foundation of the Central Library for Students in London, and its counterparts in Dunfermline and Dublin, the expansion of the service to cover most of the country, and with the new legislation of the 1918–24 period, did co-operation become a really practical proposition. It really began in Cornwall with a small scheme in 1928. There had been an earlier arrangement on a very small scale. This was organized in 1907 by A. J. Philip, of Gravesend, for inter-lending among a few libraries in the London area. By about 1936 the whole library resources of England and Wales had been co-ordinated for co-operation.

Because of the basic need to cater for the demands of its own community, each independent library can scarcely guarantee good service to the serious student whose need deviates from the general local pattern.[1] Independence has its penalties, as has been

[1] *Cf.* McColvin, L. R., *The Public Library System of Great Britain* (1942), p. 117.

seen in the history of such libraries as those presented by the Coats family to hundreds of Scottish villages. Dobbs's comments on the progress of local education apply equally to libraries. "Improvement beyond a certain stage will depend increasingly on new combinations, and on the pressure of forces which have been generated in wider fields of social enterprise . . . Country life is strewn with the remains of successive elements of culture which answered at one time a serious educational purpose, but whose range of growth is set within definite limits."[1]

In recent years there has been a realization in Eastern Europe that the independent village services of the past are inadequate for the needs of modern social and technical studies. Efforts are being made to establish networks of the village libraries centred on a large town library. In Scandinavia in the past fifty years there has been a similar awareness of the limitations of the parish and private-institution libraries, and there has been a consequent development of library services by local-government authorities which have absorbed such older libraries into their network, which has further been supported by the central government by the establishment of regional, county, libraries in the larger towns to act as central bureaux for inter-lending, as bases for travelling libraries, and as centres for instruction in library techniques for staff in smaller libraries. In Britain local-government organization provided a ready-made structure for town libraries since the 1850 Act and for the county libraries since their inception. Nevertheless, even the largest library units in this country are not self-sufficient.

The central agency of co-operation among British libraries is the National Central Library (originally the Central Library for Students), in London, which not only maintains a stock of its own (now of about 400,000 volumes), but which, to an increasing degree, is acting as a clearing-house for requests, for both books and bibliographical information, on a national scale. It also acts as a centre for international co-operation on behalf of British libraries. Its resources are virtually the sum of the stocks of all the public libraries in Britain, in addition to its own and those of the Scottish and Irish Central libraries (now in Edinburgh and Dublin respectively) and of more than 220 specialist 'outlier' libraries. The resources are enlisted and organized through eight

[1] Dobbs, A. E., *Education and Social Movements, 1700–1850* (1919), pp. 19–20.

regional systems in England and Wales, besides the agencies in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin. About a third of a million book-issues are arranged annually through these systems.

A new and vital part of the library co-operation arrangements in Britain now is the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, established in 1962 at Boston Spa, Yorkshire, primarily to collect and make available for loan the scientific literature of the world. In 1967 its services were extended to include periodicals in the field of social sciences. In addition to its loans it provides photocopying services and reference facilities.

The National Lending Library is notable for its fresh attitude to catalogues. No record is maintained of the Library's stocks: the users are required to depend on published bibliographical aids or on other libraries to identify the particular material required.

Co-operation does not end with the official inter-lending of books and other material. There is a good deal of direct informal lending of materials urgently required as well as other co-operation in minor inter-library organizations such as 'Co-Book' in Yorkshire, where several small libraries have established a system of co-operative book-purchase to avoid extravagance on the one hand and over-dependence on the regional scheme on the other.

Several public libraries also participate in co-operative technical book and information services. The first, and still a foremost, example is SINTO, centred on Sheffield Public Library and using not only its resources but those of specialist concerns in and around the city.

Co-operation exists too in the Inter-Regional Subject Coverage Scheme, designed to ensure that all published material on a special topic is held by some library in the country. The subjects have been allocated by class from the British National Bibliography so that the library is aware precisely of its responsibility.

Although the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 enables any reader who lives, is following full-time studies, or works in the area of a library authority to borrow books from these libraries, it is sometimes more convenient for a reader, for example, during holidays, to use another library. Most libraries now allow readers from outside their own area to borrow books with minimum formality. Usually it suffices that the readers produce membership tickets from their own library service.

The main co-ordinating body in all British library matters is the

Library Association, founded in 1877, granted a Royal Charter by Queen Victoria in 1898, and with its headquarters now at 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE. The aims of the Association, as recorded in the Charter, are:

"(1) To unite all persons engaged or interested in library work, by holding conferences and meetings for the discussion of bibliographical questions and matters affecting libraries or their regulation or management or otherwise.

"(2) To promote the better administration of Libraries.

"(3) To promote whatever may tend to the improvement of the position and the qualification of Librarians.

"(4) To promote the adoption of the Public Libraries Acts in any City, Borough or other district within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

"(5) To promote the establishment of reference and lending Libraries for use by the public.

"(6) To watch any legislation affecting Public Libraries and to assist in the promotion of such further legislation as may be considered necessary for the regulation and management or extension of Public Libraries.

"(7) To promote and encourage bibliographical study and research.

"(8) To collect, collate, and publish (in the form of Transactions, Journals, or otherwise) information of service or interest to the Fellows and Members of the Association, or for the promotion of the objects of the Corporation.

"(9) To form, collect and maintain a Library and Museum.

"(10) To hold examinations in Librarianship and to issue Certificates of efficiency.

"(11) To do all such lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objects."[1]

The Association is represented on several international library and bibliographical bodies. It is governed by a Council drawn largely from public librarians, though the Association is, of course, open to representatives of all types of library, and, indeed, maintains special sections—*e.g.*, Medical; Reference, Special and Information; and University, College and Research—which are very largely supported by the members of the 'non-public' section of the profession.

[1] The Library Association, *Year Book* (v.y.).

Conferences of library workers are arranged by the Library Association and by its component sections and branches.

Until 1961 the Association was not exclusively a professional body, having in full membership representatives of local authorities and other institutions who were not librarians. In recent years these representatives have been given affiliated status without voting powers.

Under the provisions of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 Library Advisory Councils for England and Wales were appointed in November 1965. The duty of each Council is to advise the Secretary of State upon such matters connected with the provision or use of library facilities whether under the Act or otherwise, as they think fit, and upon any questions referred to them by him. Among the early subjects considered by the Councils were the supply and training of librarians and standards of public-library provision.

A reflection of the Secretary of State's interest in public libraries may be seen in the notes on them which appear in the annual report of the Department of Education and Science.

A similar Library Advisory Council was formed on a voluntary basis in Northern Ireland in 1949 primarily to consider measures for the development and expansion of the library services of the Province. This Council, consisting mainly of professional and local-authority members, of Ministry and University representatives, acts in a purely advisory capacity, and attempts to co-ordinate the activities of existing authorities.

It can be concluded that the resources and organization of British public libraries are capable of a fruitful service to the community, but, despite this, there is no ample evidence that many people who could benefit from them are in fact so doing. There are many possible explanations of this.[1] Some readers may not appreciate that the public-library service exists. This sounds fantastic, a century after the first Public Libraries Acts, but it is repeatedly proved to be true. As often as not the reason lies in the inadequacy of the service provided in the particular area. Some who know of the libraries do not use them because they say that they are "too far away", "too institutional", or that "they do not keep the books we want". Other readers are not borrowers because they feel they can get as good, or better, books from

[1] *Cf.* Groombridge, Brian, *The Londoner and his library* (1964), *passim.*

commercial libraries, many of them not realizing that the public-library service is free. Others do not use the libraries for the very reason that they *are* free, thus perpetuating the notion that the free library is for the poor, and that there is some social distinction to be gained by shunning its services in favour of those provided by subscription or special libraries. Some people find that they have not the time to borrow from the library, or time to read books even if they did take them; in consequence of failing to use the most publicized section of the service they tend to neglect other, very useful departments of the library's work. And, finally, there are the non-readers, who form a very high proportion of the population, the people who never read a book.

Such is the present state of the British public library, and such are some of the problems it has to face.

7 *The Library for Education*

Improvement of the mind and education may be interpreted as the acquisition of information and the development of the skills and attitudes to make maximum use of it. The formal educational process through schools or colleges is, of course, important but informal education will proceed, often unconsciously, by the accumulation of facts and experiences. Only with substantial information and adult attitudes can mature judgments be made. Thus in the present context the term 'education' will be taken to include the process of acquiring information and 'reading' will include the simple scanning process to identify specific facts in books or any other graphic or pictorial display, what is now commonly described as information retrieval.

"Social reform is not to be secured by noise and shouting; by complaints and denunciation; by the formation of parties or the making of revolutions; but by the awakening of thought and the progress of ideas."[1] Herein lies the fundamental reason for spreading such knowledge as may be found in books, and an essential factor demanding the encouragement of a taste for good English with its resultant ability to express ideas accurately. A person's ability to express such opinions and ideas with conviction depends very largely on the size of his vocabulary and the width of his experience. Since it does not fall to the lot of many people to travel widely, 'experience' must be interpreted to include facts which are found, second-hand, in books. The limitation must be recognized, however, that "the words contained in books can be rightly interpreted into ideas, only in proportion to the antecedent experience of things".[2] Whatever relation books have to personal experience, it is undeniable that they are the recorded essence of

[1] George, Henry, *Social Problems* (1931), p. 209.
[2] Spencer, Herbert, *Education* (1910), p. 36.

many men's thoughts and lives, thus offering a broader view than can ever be attained by a single individual. Libraries, which exist to put books into action, are therefore essential to persons who seek to contribute to the progress of mankind through their own self-improvement, their own intellectual and spiritual growth. "To foster idealism and to strengthen the struggling aspirations of the human spirit is the very essence of the library's service."[1]

Since books cannot convey actuality, their message must be interpreted by their readers: the art of reading is simply the translation of the symbols on the printed page into the ideas which the author wishes to pass to the reader of his book. The effectiveness of books, and consequently of libraries, is dependent on the ability to read.

Many people can never hope to obtain the full benefits from public libraries and cannot expect to attain high standards of speech and thought because they lack this ability: they waste time and dissipate their energies in what to them is a task, and what in better circumstances could be a pleasure and a benefit.

The difficulty experienced by some people in reading can be traced to their inability to resolve what they hope to derive from it. Do they want to read every word and to hear it in their mind, or does it matter that they miss words or phrases? Is reading concerned with sound, or should it be a direct translation of print to thought? If the reader has not determined his answers to such questions he will obviously be at a disadvantage. Before starting to read a book the good reader shall, consciously or unconsciously, decide his reason for doing so. In turn the purpose shall guide the reader to his method. If he has vocal development or the writer's literary style in mind he will concentrate on every word, though not necessarily individually. If his primary idea is to absorb the views of the author or to get the gist of his plot—and this is the commonest reason for reading—sense is of first importance and the reader shall profit most by absorbing the author's meaning as quickly as possible without serious consideration of, and even at the expense of, the literary values.

Professor Sir Godfrey Thomson has pointed out that one of the chief results of reading investigations has been "that today we distinguish a number of aspects of reading, and apply ourselves now to the improvement of one, now of another. A 'good reader'

[1] Tyler, A. S., in *Library Journal*, vol. xlvi (1921), p. 586.

who can read a few paragraphs aloud clearly and in well-modulated tones (a very desirable accomplishment), may nevertheless be a 'bad reader' if asked to skim quickly through a long chapter and get its main drift, or read carefully an important passage to appreciate its argument exactly or to decide some minute question of fact as there described. These last forms of reading, rather than the power to read aloud, are what we need most in ordinary life."[1] Just how true the last statement is may be borne out by a consideration of the thousands of specific inquiries answered in reference libraries up and down the country. The reading skill in most cases lies in the isolation of the required information and the neglect of all else.

A study of adult groups would probably show the average rate of reading to be somewhere between one hundred and three hundred words per minute. But Oscar Wilde could read whole pages of a book at a glance; Sir William Robertson Nicoll's reading speed was about six hundred words per minute; and students who have taken courses in intensive reading have attained speeds of over one thousand words per minute without strain.

When so much study is dependent on books and other printed material it seems that the deplorably low average reading rate must have serious implications for all whose aim is to foster the use of books. Perhaps one of the most important is the simple fact that students will take far longer to read their books and notes than need be. The time and energy which is being wasted could be applied to other studies, or to intensifying their specialist efforts.

The four main factors governing reading speed are these: the eyesight of the reader; his initial training in reading; his powers of concentration; and the amount of practice in reading. The health of the eyes is of paramount importance, for it is impossible for anyone whose vision is in any way impaired to expect to derive consistent benefit or pleasure from what must always remain a task, strenuous and sometimes painful.

Bad initial training at school is the most certainly removable cause of poor reading at the present time, most adults having being taught by synthetic methods. They learned to build words, from which they built sentences. Thus, quite naturally, when the process is reversed and they are reading they are inclined to read

[1] Thomson, Professor Sir Godfrey H., Foreword to *Training in Reading and Study*, by George Mowat (third edition, 1942).

analytically, word by word, after which they must apply the synthetic process to create sense from the accumulation of individual words.

Word-by-word reading is seen at its worst in the reader who has to translate the printed word into sound before his mind comprehends it. An intermediate stage is the silent mouthing of words as they are read. Even now, when reading-training methods have been thoroughly tested for their faults, far too many teachers cling to outmoded elocutionary methods to the utter neglect of speed in silent practice.

It is important, of course, that children should be taught to speak properly, and the reading aloud of books is an appropriate method of doing this, but the study of elocution should be kept quite separate from the learning of reading, and it should be clearly explained to the children that they are sciences calling for quite diverse skills and learned for quite different reasons. Furthermore, it should be made clear to the children that the nature of the book will determine whether it should be read word for word or absorbed generally without concentration on the words, whether its intention is primarily literary entertainment or simply the conveyance of a message.

The fact that many people taught by the older methods have acquired great reading skill is not an indication that the methods are perfect, for they may have attained a level of proficiency only after discarding the techniques they were taught at school.

Equally it must be admitted that modern teaching methods in reading have not yet produced the highest skills. Alternative techniques such as the "Initial Teaching Alphabet" have been devized in further efforts to help the child to achieve good reading ability, but these are still at the experimental stage.

Their zeal to make children readers at any cost occasionally tends to lead misguided parents and friends into providing any material at all which the children are prepared to accept. This is partly to blame for the rise of the 'comic', which is almost wholly dependent on illustration, as an entertainment both for children and adults who have long passed the age when such material has a value in teaching reading. The popularity of the picture-strip arises from its easy interpretation. It is the lazy alternative to truly literary reading.

Consideration of illustrative material in juvenile books invites discussion of the amount of illustration which should be provided—whether too solid a mass of unbroken print may not deter the child, or too much illustration lead him to the 'pictorial' reading noted above. Similarly, the decline or disappearance of many valuable periodicals and other reviews, along with the rise of the now universally available illustrated magazines, may be a symptom of this same laziness among adults.

The majority of modern journalists do little to improve the levels of reading. By the use of a limited jargon they convey their stories effectively if sensationally, quickly if not always accurately, and by their almost predictable style hold the readers who find no strain with this easy writing, which is often little more than a string of headlines.

The public library can be the antidote to this tendency by acting as a preservative of the best in real literature. It may still be said that "the true university of these days is a collection of books. All that mankind has done, thought, gained or been: it is lying as in magic preservation, in the pages of books."[1]

In America public libraries have been successful in pointing out flaws in educational methods, especially the wrong emphasis in reading practice. This may have been inspired by the surfeit of trash which is published in the United States. If the so-called 'comic'[2] has done nothing else it has stimulated responsible opinion to a greater respect for genuine literary works.

The appreciation by American authorities of the need for thorough reading training, and their attempts to achieve this by every possible method, may be linked partially with the ability of Americans to express themselves in a crisp, outspoken forthrightness, with their aptitude for telegrammatic phraseology, which is, nevertheless, picturesque and unstilted. In Britain the quickening tempo of living is rapidly eroding the previous emphasis on grammatical accuracy and nicety at the expense of clarity and directness. While it may not be justifiable to inject raw pidgin-English into literature, there seems a good case for the development of a more brisk English. Furthermore, it seems

[1] Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841), Lecture 5.

[2] In America 'comic' indicates any type of story conveyed by the picture-strip; the story need not be amusing.

inevitable that such changes in our language will be in the direction of economy and precision.

As the speed of reading progresses, so also does the extent of the comprehension of what has been read. The reason is not far to seek: thoughts can be expressed clearly only in sentences and phrases, single words seldom being adequate. When the word-by-word reader encounters a difficult word and is held up by it, stopped by his inability to understand it, he does not tend to pause at that word and concentrate on it; nor does he, like the person who reads a whole phrase at a time, pass on. Rather, he goes back to re-read earlier passages; his interest wanders, and his reading is disorganized. As a result he does not learn the meaning of the word, and his vocabulary remains limited.

Practice contributes, as usual, to the success of the person who wishes to improve his reading ability. He tends to force his eyes to accept the widest possible group of words at a glance; recognition of words becomes easier because of increased familiarity; his vocabulary is increased; and habits of concentration are developed.

It may be suggested that increased speed in reading does *not* lead to greater comprehension because of the shorter time allowed for the absorption of the phrase-idea. The crux of the matter is that increased reading speed indicates a lower effort in the mechanics, with the mind left free to devote itself to comprehension, in the practice of what is a dual mental operation.

Although there had been investigations into the technique of rapid reading long before, the main upsurge of interest in the subject came about during the latter part of the 1939–45 War. In Britain and United States there was a clear realization of two conflicting factors—namely, that in an increasingly technological society quick absorption of the printed word was vital in the interests of efficiency and economy, and secondly that the difficulties of many adults in reading at all were greater than had generally been appreciated. These factors immediately led to the publication of books, the organization of courses, and the development of equipment, all to help to increase reading speeds. It has been demonstrated that many readers can without serious difficulty double their normal rate of reading.

The question of practical reading ability has been treated at some length since it is fundamental to good library use. Yet in the past public libraries have shown an almost casual attitude to it and

have taken no concerted action to ensure that their readers were, indeed, capable of reading at all! It is true, perhaps, that the young child has been asked if he can read, and probably any doubts have been dispelled by a short practical demonstration. But what of the adult reader? Is he as good a reader of his adult literature as the little boy was of his junior book? There has always been a ready presumption that it is the person who comes to the public library who is the good reader, that he is already trained to read. The library provides the material on which to use the presumed skill, but, in fact, few library-users are well-qualified readers.

The new attitude of the public library is to carry its message (whatever it may be) out to the people who are still unaware of it; it is missionary now, in contrast with its nineteenth-century attitude of waiting for the people to come asking for its benefits. It can still learn a lesson from the great commercial advertisers, who have had more practice in this field. Instead of confining itself to publicizing the advantages of the public library it should demonstrate too how these advantages can best be capitalized. Instead of a list of its services it should give instruction on how the reader can improve his basic skill in the use of books and the use of libraries. A few elementary books have been published on the utilization of the libraries' services, of course, but these have been concerned largely with reference work rather than with the reading of whole books, and rather with the contents of the books than with the practical reading of them.

It would be to the credit of public libraries, then, if an effort were made by them to improve the practice of reading, and a greater proportion of their future policy might well be devoted to persuading people how, rather than what, they should read for their own profit.

The benefits that come from increased skill in reading are reflected in an improved ability to express one's opinion in clear, unambiguous language. The value of this is inestimable, for one of the most frequent causes of friction in human relationships is the frustration of being conscious of the righteousness of a cause without the ability to transmit this message to others. Those who are familiar with multi-lingual proceedings will need no persuasion on this point, for they appreciate how often language differences accentuate the outstanding points in the way of international

understanding. These are merely projections of what can easily happen in normal relations among people using the same language, but who are insufficiently skilled in semantics.

In communities struggling to achieve the literacy of the majority it is still vital that a substantial library service should be provided to hold the ground already gained. There is certainly little justification for the statement by one public-library-authority member in a developing country who said that since half the population are illiterate it would be wasteful to provide a first-class library service for them.

The reading habit is important then, and is worth cultivating by a fully developed library service. But there is often apathy to overcome; in some cases there is even antagonism to the notion that reading can be a pleasure and a benefit. Anti-literacy is a problem as serious as illiteracy. Far too often the methods of teaching reading at school have resulted only in inculcating in the children the feeling that reading is drudgery; this may be due particularly to the use of the elocutionary method in the junior school and to the adoption of unsuitable classical texts as literary examples in the senior grades. It is worth noting how many of the books quite generally accepted as dull are prescribed texts for study in schools—*The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Moby Dick*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Faerie Queene*, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, *Pamela*, *Silas Marner*, and *Ivanhoe*. So much emphasis is laid on the history of literature that the children are forced to wrestle with much material written in archaic, and for them difficult and unfamiliar, language before they come to an appreciation of literature which they can understand. Not only is there built up in them a resistance to books generally, but there is developed a dislike of the best in the history of literature. It is easy to realize that studies which have proved frustrating at school, which seemed to have little to do with the current affairs of life, are unlikely to be those which the young adult will seek to follow. It is interesting to see how many people become enthusiastic readers after their first antagonism is subdued. This is easily accounted for by the fact that their reading has become an object of interest instead of school-work, and this is a clamant need when inspired thought and expression are being encouraged. Good reading habits may be difficult for some people to attain, but so are other desirable accomplishments. It may take a long time to become a proficient reader, but when the advantage

is to the individual, to the community, and perhaps to civilization itself the time may be thought well spent.

Whatever the speed of reading and understanding of the books borrowed from libraries, whatever the aspirations of the readers, it seems reasonable to suppose that some degree of satisfaction is derived from the libraries' services. Otherwise why are the libraries used at all?[1] Obviously, the public want to read, and they find the public library a convenient source of material.

One reason, not yet fully appreciated by the library-users themselves, is fundamental: the books are organized. Books do not convey their messages without the reader: he is essential to an interpretation of the contents of a book. Similarly, a library has to be explained or explored, and the reader has to be guided, or he must seek out for himself, the wealth in the mass of books available if the fullest advantage is to be derived from the library. "Coming to the books which people read for permanent instruction and profit, consider how much time is lost, how much labour is lost, by the unguided student who, at 16, 17, or 18 years of age, enters a library and asks for a book upon the subject he wishes to read about. You may ask, why does he not go to the old standard classical authorities? He may. He may find Hume and Smollett in history, but if he reads them he will lose much time, for a great deal of the historical method of the last forty to sixty years has been employed in correcting the errors of Hume and Smollett. Yet the man who has heard this spoken of as the standard history of England is as likely to go to Hume and Smollett as he is to go to Green or Gardiner, or any other of our English authorities. Therefore in the interest of the student, it is extremely important that he should also have some instruction and suggestions and hints as to the right way in which to read."[2]

This guidance for the reader calls for great skill because the

[1] Consideration has been given to the physical causes of attendance in libraries—the warmth of the buildings, the readily available chairs—but these scarcely rank in importance with the non-physical reasons; nor do they appear as social factors comparable with the corresponding elements in, say, cinema attendance. Anyone interested in these aspects will find that Richard Hoggart paints a vivid picture of some visitors to the old-fashioned public library reading-room in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), pp. 60–61.

[2] Bryce, James, first Viscount, in Library Association, *Public Libraries: their Development and Future Organization* (1918), p. 40.

ability and discretion of the reader's adviser shall determine to what extent the library maintains real freedom of choice to its readers. The increasing stress laid on the value of such liaisons between the readers and the books may tend to blind the librarian and the readers—to a less degree, fortunately—to the existence of a possible direction of taste, attitude, or viewpoint contrary to the public library's tradition of liberty.

At the same time diplomatic and liberal guidance is of the greatest importance in the library's missionary function, because unused books are lumber, whereas the same books put to use may be of incomparable value and influence. The library must be active, and not rely constantly on the readers' initiative. As Bostwick has said of the American public library, it is only in the last fifty years that the library began to "conceive of its duties as extending to the entire community, instead of being limited to those who voluntarily entered its doors".[1]

Even so, it is only some of the libraries who are paying heed to this ideal of active service. Furthermore, in the progressive libraries to get the readers in is not enough. Even those who enter the library should be considered actively so that the book-stocks and other resources are tailored to their needs. If the maximum communication between reader and resources is to be achieved the readers' needs must be identified and the resources organized for maximum exploitation. The library with the greatest sum of materials is not necessarily the most effective; it may even be the most confusing, with much to offer, but little guidance to users.

Here, then, is a primary reason for the use of the public library. The reader has come to know that he is welcomed and that advice will be given freely without any bias or pressure. He knows that the public library has specialized in the creation of the tools for his needs—catalogues, bibliographies, classifications, special collections, and the like.

Further, it is well to remember that, no matter how willing the student may be to build up his own library, he cannot hope to have at all times all the books he may want and need. The chief restrictions of our times are threefold—limitations of space, money, and supply. The private libraries owned by many artisans in the mid-nineteenth century, as described in the 1849 Public Libraries Committee *Report*, are not matched in the homes of their

[1] Bostwick, Arthur E., *The American Public Library* (1923), p. 1.

descendants. Wider educational opportunities have emphasized that many modern houses lack the shelf or cupboard space to accommodate a library of any size; equally they do not provide generally the many rooms to enable several members of the same family to follow separate educational and other cultural activities conveniently. This is reflected in the dwindling personal libraries and in the struggle facing many children whose studies may have to be followed in a house dominated by a continuous television programme. The latter problem has been recognized by some libraries because it has well-nigh overwhelmed their reference-library seating capacity.

The study-space problem was mentioned in the *Third Interim Report on Libraries and Museums* of the Ministry of Reconstruction's Adult Education Committee fifty years ago: "It is, in our view, essential that in all public libraries, in addition to the usual reading room where newspapers and magazines are consulted, there should be a room for the purposes of study. It is too often forgotten that many students have no place where they can study in comfort."[1]

This aspect has still been too often forgotten, with the result that the great increase in further education has created substantial problems in many libraries, especially in towns with universities or colleges. The Working Party on public-library standards in 1962 referred to the fact that "the public library has for a long time been the resort of the student. We refer particularly to college and university students both in term-time and vacation, but we also have in mind senior pupils in secondary schools, part-time and day-release students at technical colleges, adult students attending evening classes and students working entirely on their own. Libraries provide all these, in varying degrees, not only with room to study but with many of the books they need. We hope that the pressure on library accommodation will be relieved as adequate university and college buildings are provided, but a need will remain for the public library to help the student with both books and room for study. We consider that all public libraries must be prepared to play their part in meeting this need, not only for students in educational establishments but for students working on their own."[2]

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

[2] Ministry of Education, Working Party on Standards of Public Library Service in England and Wales, *Report* (1962), para. 21.

If there has been pressure in the past from students' use of library accommodation, the continuing encouragement to further education, especially in the activities of the Open University, must inevitably emphasize further the part to be played by the public library in the provision of study space.

In the United States the problem also exists in large towns with many non-residential educational institutions. Indeed, in any literate community there may easily arise the situation where there is a competition for study space in libraries between the formal student and the information-seeking member of the general public.

Even so, for different reasons, the public library in developing countries must provide students with accommodation, for which their need is obviously in inverse proportion to the facilities in their own homes. In Western Samoa and in the Caribbean islands this has been stressed as an important function of the library, especially in relation to school homework.

Although the public library may help to alleviate the study-space problem this does not fulfil the student's aspirations to a personal library which must be accommodated. Even the modest acquisitions of the book-club member may become an embarrassment. Books are expensive, although comparison with increases in the price of other goods shows them to be one of the relatively cheap commodities. Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that the cost of the average book represents a quarter of a day's income for the average wage-earner, so it is hardly surprising that the collection of private libraries has decreased. Furthermore, many books are out of print and unobtainable except in the uncertain second-hand market; and many out-of-print books will probably never be reprinted.

This does not mean, of course, that efforts should not be made to maintain a private library. Indeed, one of the best books on the subject of building such a library is by a public librarian, Lionel R. McColvin,[1] and one of the recommendations of the Scottish Advisory Council on Public Libraries and Museums was that such libraries should be encouraged. "We believe that it is just as necessary to have a personal collection of books as to borrow books. The habit of buying books, with prudence and discrimination, comes naturally to a small number of young people, especially

[1] McColvin, L. R., *The Personal Library* (1953).

if the home atmosphere is favourable. But clearly with the great majority the habit has to be taught. . . . We therefore recommend that definite official encouragement be given to the pupils in every Scottish school to lay the foundation of a small personal library, and that their attention be drawn to the kind of book suitable for the purposes."[1]

There are some books which are constant companions, which can be read at any time with pleasure; others are constantly being needed for reference. A home cannot be complete without some of the giants of literature and some of the handbooks to which the householder or his wife can turn for first aid on any topic. Furthermore, this does not mean that the library shall compete with the bookseller for custom. On the contrary, the public library may serve to encourage the purchase of books, and it certainly stimulates the use of books.[2] This may be better appreciated if the aims of the bookseller and the librarian are detailed. Both wish to develop a greater use of books: they want to see a greater number of them being used, and they want to encourage a more thorough use of the books in existence. Both are anxious to create an informed public who appreciate the significance of books. For one reason or another the librarian would like to see the best selection of books available for consultation by all; the bookseller wants this too, so that he can sell his stock. The librarian is constantly stimulating interest in books, and perhaps does more than the bookseller himself to foster a book-buying public; he is a direct buyer, and offers a permanent shop-window for the bookseller on a larger scale than the latter can hope to emulate.

In Czechoslovakia about the time of their new Library Act of 1959 experiments were made in some villages with a combined library and bookshop. In 1966, in Hälsingborg, Sweden, a similar experiment to encourage book-ownership and to support bookselling was effected when three local booksellers provided sales facilities at a kiosk prominently in the city library for three months each at a time. The space was rented from the library authority. It was found that although popular books were sold many readers were content to wait for books through the reservation facilities of the library.

[1] Scottish Education Department: Advisory Council on Education, *Report on Libraries, Museums, and Art Galleries* (1951), para. 133.

[2] *Cf.* Groombridge, B., *The Londoner and his library* (1964), pp. 43–44.

In Britain in 1969 a closer relationship between the local-authority associations and the book-trade associations was established. Co-operation of public libraries in selling books was one of the topics discussed by the Association of Municipal Corporations Libraries Committee, who referred to the few booksellers readily accessible to the public in many parts of the country. Among their suggestions was one on the lines of the Hälsingborg experiment with space to be leased to the bookseller for the sale of books; alternatively space might be allocated to the book trade for advertisements of books on sale elsewhere; the sale by libraries of books was not recommended.

Nevertheless, working together, the bookseller and the librarian can give each other much help in their common aims.

Because of their greater resources the public libraries are in a good position to collect out-of-the-way books and expensive works which are beyond the pocket of the common reader; in fact they exist to do this, and *must* find space to store the books. Thus they become the dispensaries of a legacy of literature which would be otherwise inaccessible to the majority of people. Herein lies the great potential significance of the public library, for it can "make accessible the heritage of culture, in the widest sense of the word, to any who may wish to take advantage of it".[1] When it is used properly the library "transmits the social heritage and inculcates the values and experiences of the past into the group with a unifying effect; it enables the individual to appraise present trends, and future values, enhances the quality of his personal life, and provides a means for climbing the social ladder".[2] And by such encouragement to climb the social scale the library demonstrates its fundamentally democratic attitude of presenting the opportunity to all.

As well as being a source of new thought, stimulating invention, and generally advancing culture, the library preserves the best of the past. In periods when economic conditions are not conducive to the publication of works of limited interest, on specialized or local topics, the library may acquire the added valuable function as the repository of manuscripts and privately printed works which at other times might have qualified for publication as books, in

[1] Laski, Harold J., in *Library Association Record* (September 1935), p. 357.

[2] Martin, L., in *Library Quarterly*, vol. vii (1937), p. 554.

magazines, or in the proceedings of learned societies. This is a significant duty which probably would fall mainly on the local or other special collections, but which could equally be part of the work of the general lending libraries, as, indeed, it has been for a long time in the private collections of industrial concerns and scientific institutions.

A possible projection of this function is the publication by the public library itself of such unpublished material in its collections. In the past too often the manuscripts of unpublished work have perished at the death of the writer. The loss in this way may have been a blessing in some cases, but it is quite certain that the wastage of much useful local material has been considerable.

It may be appropriate here to refer to the contribution of the public library to authorship. Not all authors agree that they benefit as much financially from public libraries as they should. Most of the protests in this field come from the writers of novels, who claim that public lending from the libraries somehow constitutes a breach of their copyright and deprives them of income. This question of the so-called "Public Lending Right" is outlined in Chapter 9.

The significance of the public library will be established by the need for it in the light of present-day conditions; it must be judged accordingly in competition with the other media and organizations which operate in the same fields, which have the same aims and attack the same problems. Today other means than books can provide more effectively some of the messages contained in books. For instance, the cinema and the radio have certain characteristics which equip them better for demonstrations than books, and this must be recognized as an indication of a relative decrease in the importance of some aspects of public-library service when that service is confined exclusively to books. It is still fair, however, to claim that, next to schools, the greatest single educational influence is that of the public library. Just how long this state of affairs will last depends on many factors, a few of which are discussed in a later chapter.

Although public libraries are the sole institution to which people can turn for books and information on any topic at all, this does not mean that there are not other organizations, public and private, which offer valuable and efficient help on wide aspects of living—*e.g.*, Citizens' Advice Bureaux—nor does it neglect the fact that

there are other libraries to which many users, from wide sections of the community, may have recourse—*e.g.*, the specialist libraries such as those in universities, colleges, and industrial firms to which the members of these bodies may turn. The latter libraries are organized with their own community and purpose in mind: they were created for this group of users and operate primarily for their benefit.

The national reference libraries are theoretically available to all adults in the country, but in practice their use is limited to those people who can afford time and money to travel to them. This means that their influence is limited to people living in and around the larger towns, where most of the reference libraries are situated.

It is vital that any community should have a central, well-known focal point for the provision of information, and the public library is, or should be, that point. As A. W. McClellan has put it, the public library is different from other libraries because of its *accessibility*. "The library must be available to all citizens and, so as to eliminate any possible restriction, it must be available freely. The recognition of the need for co-operation between independently controlled libraries implies further that accessibility is not to be limited to the recorded knowledge and experience stored in the one library or system. It is implied that potentially there should be free accessibility to all recorded knowledge and experience. The framework of information makes two valued assumptions: that the function of a library and the right of accessibility to it are significant for all members of society, whether as individuals they make use of it or not.

"The central significance of accessibility to all recorded knowledge and experience is underlined by the absence of any restriction or guidance as to the nature of the contents of the library."[1]

After the 1939–45 War there were still some large subscription libraries which by their extensive service were akin to public libraries. They operated through a great postal service or through their branches scattered widely in the larger towns. While the geographic extent of this service gave the impression of accessibility to very many people, yet these libraries had serious limitations and could not claim to give service comparable with a good public library's facilities. By their rules they could be selective of their

[1] *Library Association Record* (July 1962), pp. 236–237.

membership so that they were not truly public, and they could charge whatever fee or subscription they thought fit, so that another, economic, selection was applied.

Although in former times these libraries diverted support from the public libraries, the growing strength of the latter turned the tables, and readers left the subscription libraries in such numbers for the public libraries that most of the former closed down during the 1950's. Whether this was a happy state of affairs is a matter for debate.

Of the few remaining subscription services perhaps the greatest is the London Library, but even it is in financial straits, to some degree alleviated, however, by the access to its stock given to other libraries, which may now join institutionally. Thus one of the shortcomings of the subscription libraries has almost been inverted. One of their problems was that they relied almost exclusively on their own stock resources, so that their services could not claim to supply books difficult to obtain—old and out-of-print items or specialist technical material, for example. They did not participate in the national interlending schemes used by the rate-supported libraries. Nevertheless, now the London Library's stocks, rich in nineteenth-century literature, are available through the institutional membership it offers to public libraries.

The Department of Education and Science Report on Education No. 34 (February 1967), *Public Libraries and Education*, opened: "Public libraries are a form of educational and cultural provision freely available to all", but this was no new claim on their behalf, for as long ago as 1876 a United States Bureau of Education report on the American public library had called it "the one secular institution which encourages self-development as an aim."[1]

In Denmark recently too, in the Public Libraries Act of 1964, library objectives were stated plainly: "The aim of the public libraries is to promote knowledge, education and cultural activity by providing books and other suitable materials free of charge." The Act specifies later that libraries must be provided in all primary schools and that there must be close collaboration between the school and public libraries.

Considering the education of children first, it seems inevitable

[1] United States of America, Bureau of Education, *Public Libraries in the United States* (1876), Part I, p. 390.

in the ever-widening system that the tendency will increase of offering a standardized educational course which may be suitable for the majority, but which allows no great scope for individuality of interest, ability, or attainment. It is now almost universal practice for the educational standards of any country to be under the control of some single authority which prescribes what shall be taught. This is true of the United Kingdom, where local authorities provide the facilities under the supervision of inspectorates of the central ministry or department. One county education officer in England has described the post-1944 position thus: "We are now able to develop a national system of education and, as with other services in which a more even distribution of opportunity is desirable, there are great opportunities, but also dangers of uniformity."[1] Apart from the dictation of the central departments and despite protestations to the contrary, British schools still are forced to form a curriculum which equips the child for entry either into the employment race or directly into higher colleges or the universities. Furthermore, with the raising of the school-leaving age the numbers of scholars have increased, throwing a heavier burden on the teaching staffs. The result is that whatever individual tuition can be given to any pupil must be regarded as a mere frill on the foundation of a standardized practice; and such tuition will perhaps be found more often in the hopes of the teacher than in the realization of them.

But "education is not an affair of childhood and youth, it is the business of whole life".[2]

Complete education must have the support, continuously, of the other institutions which are catering for intellectual development. In adolescence and in adult life the libraries will have much more effect on their readers than the memories of school tuition. Admittedly the mechanical lessons of youth remain, but in matters affecting the improvement of personal taste and discerning opinions the reading of books has a greater impact on the maturer mind which is no longer fully occupied by the purely mechanical functions.

In the nineteenth century and in the early years of the twentieth it might have been reasonable to say that in formal education the

[1] Woodhead, E. W., editor, *Education Handbook*, No. 2 (1944), p. 1.
[2] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 44.

pace of instruction was set by the slower pupils, and thus retarded instead of advancing the brighter students. Thus it was an education more beneficial to the duller person. Now, however, such pressure is exerted in the classes to qualify them for their 'passing-out' examinations that backward pupils (and it is accepted that backwardness in literary ability is usually associated with generally retarded development) are neglected to ensure the highest standard for those who are expected to qualify at these examinations. Thus the child who most needs help in reading guidance is left farther behind than ever, instead of receiving the encouragement and training which is being almost monopolized by the brighter child. Illiteracy is one of the by-products of the high-tension struggle towards better education: some of the efforts to improve the standards of education are automatically contributing to their own defeat.

The ideal, of course, lies between the system which takes the pace of the slowest and the alternative where the race is to the swift and where falterers are left by the way. In some of the less formal schools the method approaches more nearly that of the library, which provides the materials of study but leaves the student to take his own time over it, in which case the brilliant are encouraged to push on, while the slower workers find it more advantageous to take their longer time on the study in order to master their difficulties. This ensures that a bright reader can tackle material which would be denied him in formal instruction; he is encouraged to try work which may be slightly beyond his capacity, with the result that his field is widened and his skills improved.

In the use of the public library there is no feeling on the part of the student that he is under an authority which sets him the pattern of study, and accordingly there is engendered in him a feeling of independence, which in turn inspires self-confidence and self-discipline. A public library can offer as wide a field of study as anyone needs, but it can also offer specialist influences in any subject—for example, through its local collections, it may provide in great detail information on local features. In addition, these collections can help the student to put his own work into perspective in relation to the area, should the study be one which has a regional basis.

Sir J. Y. W. MacAlister, speaking in 1917 of German education

and intellectual development, said that "it lacked the essential elements of *freedom and morality*". He continued: "It is, to my mind, one of the greatest virtues of the library movement as an element in national education that it is necessarily an instrument of liberty and the enemy of over-rigid systematization. Our one aim is to put freely before those whom we serve all that is best in the world's literature. The student may perhaps be too narrowly, too specially, trained in his academic routine. We supply the best of antidotes when we invite him to wander among our bookshelves and decide for himself what he will read!"[1] Later in the same discussion L. S. Jast moved a resolution as follows: "The aim of the library as an educational institution is best expressed in the formula 'Self-development in an atmosphere of freedom', as contrasted with the aim of the school which is 'Training in an atmosphere of restraint or discipline'; in the school the teacher is dominant, but the pupil strikes out his own line in the library, which supplies the written material upon which the powers awakened and trained in the school can be exercised; furthermore, the contacts of the library with organized education cease where the educational machinery terminates; but the library continues an educational force of national importance in its contacts with the whole social, political, and intellectual life of the community; the recognition of the true place of the library in education must carry with it the provision of adequate financial resources, which is impossible under the present limitation on the library rate; such limitation therefore should be removed at the earliest possible moment."[2] An American point of view about the same time was: "The right sort of library rightly used supplies a natural means of self-realization and self-adjustment supplemental to all other school agencies and effective where all other agencies fail."[3]

D. J. Simpson dealt with this need for individual self-development in his Library Association Prize Essay in 1958.

"In our society, where technical progress, and the division of labour inseparable from it, has led to large social institutions such as the state, large industrial firms, trades unions, or even churches

[1] Library Association, *Public Libraries: their Development and Future Organization* (1918), p. 8.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[3] Kerr, Willis H., in *Public Libraries* (a monthly review), vol. xix (1914), p. 150.

and sporting clubs whose leaders may be little known by their many rank-and-file members, the dignity and rights of the individual have recently been losing ground. The non-conformer, the one who does not think like the herd and whose ideals are different, enjoys little toleration from others. This discourages original thought and, in the long run, impoverishes society. The library can fight this creeping paralysis by offering a complete panorama of human ideas, not just those acceptable to the herd. Only by free unrestricted enquiry can the individual develop his personality fully. If some areas of knowledge are barred to him, his personality may be stunted, warped or lop-sided, and his mind will see everything through a distorting lens designed by those who restricted his development."[1]

Reference to non-conformers and different ideals prompts thoughts of the now considerable immigrant population in Britain who must be integrated but who nevertheless will retain their inevitable racial differences.

Because the library offers the whole range of subjects it can provide for the large immigrant population in many of Britain's towns a selection in their own language for the older people and can help the young to familiarize themselves with their new homeland. The library offers the dual facility of preserving the immigrant's original cultural heritage and of offering contact with the new. A co-operative system for the loan to other libraries of books in foreign languages for immigrants from India and Pakistan has been established by Birmingham Public Libraries.

As an easy method of self-realization in the literary field, in an effort to find a ready-made course in the reading of popular, if not classic, literature, many people have sought the help of the several book clubs which sprang up from 1930 onward. These clubs, some of them most commendable in their efforts to offer good literature cheaply, and others mere excuses for disposing of trash at more than wastepaper prices, deliver regularly a supply of books chosen by a panel of 'experts'. But, once again, here is the unifying influence. The reader has little effect on what books he is going to read. The choice is foisted on him, and it probably reflects the most popular topical taste, least calculated to develop individuality. This is in direct contrast with the public-library methods, where book selection is not prejudiced by commercial

[1] *Library Association Record* (November 1958), p. 328.

interest, changing fashions, or fluctuating politics. The library is thus more likely to ensure stable progress in education and culture. By its impartiality it has added strength. "The wide world is wholesome; though there are poisonous constituents in the air, in the water, yet the combinations are good. So it is with great libraries. There is an ethical and psychological chemistry which makes the *totality* of the record of human thought and feeling a witness for what is wholesome, true and good."[1] Because it is catholic the public library is less liable to corrupt influences and is an antidote to cheap journalism.

The potential value of the library after, as well as during, schooling makes it important that teachers appreciate its methods and use. They must describe and appraise them properly for their pupils.

M. L. Jacks has asserted most emphatically that total education cannot be carried out solely in schools and other institutions specifically devoted to an educational aim, and pressed for a better realization of the potentialities of art galleries and exhibitions, museums and libraries, the theatre and the cinema, the London and provincial Press. "We need again a library-service which will make it its business to get books into the schools as well as to attract readers to its own rooms. It is to be hoped that among the projected reforms of the Public Library this will not be forgotten: devolution will be necessary, and there seems no reason why branches of the Public Library should not actually be housed in the schools; the fact that members of the public would have to go to the schools for their books would be all to the good."[2] While the latter view is open to doubts, there can be no division of opinion on the value of library service in schools.

But the main significance for the present study of such a statement by so distinguished an educationist is that he was protesting the *need* for schools library service, which suggests an ignorance, or lack of appreciation, of the efforts made, by county libraries especially, to extend this service. The remarkable fact remains that in the majority of cases the libraries have offered the services before the school authorities had thought of asking for them. Indeed, cases are known of strong resistance by teachers to

[1] Lyster, Thomas W., quoted in Jast, L. S., *Libraries and Living* (1932), p. 28.

[2] Jacks, M. L., *Total Education* (1946), p. 102.

the inception of a library service in their schools. It is deplorable, but true, that many teachers are ignorant of the value of books and unaware of the facilities given by the public libraries.

Whatever methods are used by school-teachers to teach reading and to try to instil the reading habit in children, they are not wholly successful: they must be a poor advertisement for the joys of reading, as so few children carry their interest in books over to adult life.

"Huxley has well said that a system of education which in early years trains boys and girls to read and then makes no provision for what they shall read during all the rest of their lives, would be as senseless as to teach our children the expert use of the knife, fork and spoon, and then make no provision for their daily bread."[1] Or, as Dawson, a witness before the 1849 Committee, put it: "For the last many years in England everybody has been educating the people, but they have forgotten to find them any books. In plain language, you have made them hungry, but you have given them nothing to eat."[2] Huxley and Dawson might have said equally well that a system of education would fail which, even providing libraries, did not ensure the useful continuation of the faculty of reading, the teaching of which had occupied the children's early years.

The most important single influence on a child's interest in books is his home atmosphere. Where parents have the reading habit, where books are part of the permanent 'furniture' of a home, constantly at hand and often consulted, then almost certainly the child adopts the habit too, becomes a reader, and remains one for life.

However, for reasons already mentioned, the buying of books is not as easy as it was; whatever the availability of the books, the home conditions are not encouraging. Homes with children too often do not have space for a good collection of books. Where parents are public-library readers there may be only a handful of books in evidence at one time, and for several reasons, among them perhaps the thought of accidents, the children may not be encouraged to handle the library books. The purchase of books for a home creates a greater respect in children for them, both physically, for their appearance, and intellectually, for their

[1] Dewey, Melvil, in *Transactions and Proceedings of the Second International Library Conference, held in London July 13–16, 1897*, p. 20.

[2] Public Libraries Committee *Report* (1849), Q. 1308.

contents. If some at least are worth buying, the young people may reason, they *must* have some value, but if they are just borrowed and taken back, perhaps they cannot matter so much?

A minority of homes contain book-collections of any sort. The major influence then passes from the home to the school-teachers, whose apparent failures have just been noted. The Ministry of Education pamphlet, *The School Library*, in its first edition noted that "Eighty years of compulsory schooling have shown that the desire to read, the ability to discriminate in reading and the habit of using books to enrich life are assuredly not effects that can be left to the operation of nature. They have only too plainly been 'gifts of fortune' that passed the majority of children by."[1] "The disappointment that is frequently voiced over the failure of the schools to produce a reading population seems to suggest a serious miscalculation in their hopes. It might, in fact, almost be said that it has proved comparatively easy to teach the children of the nation how to read; to create in them the wish to read and the ability to distinguish between what is worth reading and what is not, has proved exceedingly difficult."[2]

The Scottish Advisory Council on Education's *Report* on libraries, issued a little earlier, had recorded a similar unhappy conclusion. "Rapidly as the public library system has developed in this country, it has not taken such a hold nor played such a part in national life as its sponsors hoped and foretold. On the contrary, very many children leave school without any urge to continue their education or broaden their interests by the greatest single instrument open and available to every individual in the community, namely, the public library service. We suggest that this points to some serious defect in library methods or in educational methods or in both. It is not enough to teach children to read, to make books available, even to visit libraries and have library periods in schools, and then hope for the best."[3] "Libraries have reached or are approaching a temporary limit to their usefulness, because the schools have not yet given adequate training in the use and power of books."[1] "One cannot get the best out of books without

[1] Ministry of Education, *The School Library* (1952), p. 4.

[2] Department of Education and Science, *The School Library* (second edition, 1967), p. 3.

[3] Scottish Education Department: Advisory Council on Education, *Report on Libraries, Museums, and Art Galleries* (1951), para. 129.

bringing something to them—some interest in the subject matter and some technique for using them. These things do not arise spontaneously or casually. Interest has to be aroused and technique learnt. Both are in our opinion very far short of their reasonable development in a country with a well-established system of compulsory education."[2]

The Northern Ireland Library Advisory Council's *Report on School Libraries* (1951) was concerned more with recommendations than with reporting, since investigations had shown that up to 1947 there still existed in Northern Ireland only a haphazard system of school-library provision, based largely on the original 'county box of books' conception of libraries. There was no suggestion in the *Report* of a general fulfilment of the Council's ideal that "If the function of the school library is to be properly performed, the library must be easily accessible; it must be used by all pupils, methodical instruction in its use must be given; and there must be, as part of the school routine, regular opportunities for working in it."[3]

Of course, it would be easy to blame teachers for failing in the specific task of teaching reading and the love of books, but one is tempted to wonder if Sir J. Y. W. MacAlister's remarks in 1917 may not still apply. "There is much that is disquieting in connection with the life of the youth of this country, and one of the causes is the fact that the lives of so many of our future citizens are empty of all intellectual interests. It is to be questioned whether there exists at the present time anything like the desire to *know* which it was the great achievement of the old Mechanics' Institutes to have created and fostered."[4] Is the truth perhaps that teachers are required to impress on the child so much factual information, for regurgitation at examinations, that no time is left for education, for showing the child that he alone holds the key to his own future, that it is in the *urge to learn* that wisdom is found? Because of the struggle to satisfy examiners and the artificial need to produce passes in the results, teachers are forced to present an

[1] Scottish Education Department: Advisory Council on Education, *Report on Libraries, Museums, and Art Galleries* (1951), para. 131.

[2] *Ibid.*, para. 27.

[3] *Op. cit.*, para. 2.

[4] The Library Association, *Public Libraries: their Development and Future Organization* (1918), p. 9.

education which is not a true bringing out of knowledge through methodical investigation, but a repetitive display of facts. Another contributor to the same Report, the Mayor of Birmingham, brought the focus on to the crying need in schools "to instil into the mind of the child what to read, how to read it, and the object of reading it".[1] The schools have long told the child what to read; it is easy to repeat the lists which have been passed uncritically down the succeeding generations of teachers. Now the teachers are shifting emphasis from reading aloud to the silent use of books, to encourage the faculty which is so much more commonly used and needed; methods of reading training are improving as the result of very much research and experiment. But the object of reading is still neglected. The desire to read, the urge to go on reading after the compulsion of school has passed, depends on whether the child leaves the school convinced that books are of some use to him. If there is any doubt about their value the chances are that the child will not become an adult reader.

At the opening of the new Crewe Central Library in January 1967 Denis Howell, Joint Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, spoke on the importance of books and libraries and referred to reading skill. "Using books is the most important of all educational attainments. From the ability to read all else flows. Students and scholars have always known this. But today many families still *do* not possess a book, nor encourage their children to read.

"In this situation the public library service and its relationship with the schools becomes of ever increasing importance and is being given a new dimension by the Government.

"Every child needs the thrill of discovery in his life. The schools meet this in many different ways but if it does not include the ability to choose good books, to explore the rich possibilities of our libraries, then such an education is deficient in its content.

"This is vital. There is an art to be learnt in using books—in selecting the right ones and getting from them just what we need. A well-trained, well-guided power of reading and a skill in using resources is the bed-rock of our culture—one of the most important skills our schools must teach.

"But to learn to use books we must read them well. It is

[1] The Library Association, *Public Libraries: their Development and Future Organization* (1918), p. 22.

disastrous, therefore, for any child to leave our schools short of this ability—disastrous in terms of potential personal development, satisfaction and pleasure. Far too many of these personal disasters still occur in 1967.

"I would like to think that every head teacher who has such a child leaving school realises the size of his responsibility."[1]

In the school library, as elsewhere, the solution lies in the presentation of books as an integral part of life. The Ministry of Education pamphlet referred to the means of success in creating the reading habit as dependent "upon such factors as the example of the staff in showing a genuine interest in books, an adequate supply of attractive books, and plenty of time and opportunity to enjoy them".[2] It is necessary, in consequence, for the teachers to possess that genuine interest, but there is no general evidence of it.

It has been seen that the school library has two primary aims: to help in the teaching of reading by the provision of good stocks for practice and simultaneously to encourage the habit of reading books continuously and of consulting reference materials for information as the need arises. There is another concurrent advantage that the stocks of the school library should be wide enough not only to embrace all the subjects taught in the school but also to extend the interests of the children to other topics: this process will help to widen the judgment of the children on the relative importance of each subject but will also enable them to see the educational process as a whole rather than as a series of disparate topics to be learned.

Important as these aims may be there is one which is paramount in a school library. Because more is learned after school than is ever learned in it one of its functions must be to lead children to adult education sources, especially the public library. Thus it must also be a function of school to familiarize children with the use of this vital educational tool, and the obvious method is by use and demonstration in the school library.

The Ministry of Education booklets have said that a good library faithfully reflects the current life of the school, but if the library reflects *only* the school life it is automatically ensuring the co-termination of reading and school attendance. It should be a mirror to every aspect of life familiar to the child, and should be

[1] Quoted in *Library Association Record* (February 1967), p. 36.

[2] Ministry of Education, *The School Library* (1952), p. 24.

the means of forearming him for the experiences still to come; after all, it may be the only way for the child to see beyond his own limited orbit, it may be the gateway to an opportunity to see a mode of life calculated to bring profit both to the community and to himself.

Thus the teacher must be ready to teach the use of a library to enable the child to pursue his own education eventually without the teacher at all. In other words the teacher must teach the child to use the tool which makes him independent of continuous personal tuition. This is not a task likely to meet any resistance, for at a progressively earlier age young people are seeking their independence of teacher and parental controls.[1] If a school fails in this it is doing incalculable harm to the pupil and depriving him of ready access to the public library's full service. Paradoxically there are school libraries which are so *good* that they have failed to guide their pupils to the public library. Because their stocks and staff are so effective at school level the staff fail to see that they are building up a dead-end instrument. The child has all the answers perfectly as long as he is at school, and so is not encouraged to seek the public library's service for the same purposes while he is still at school. The result is that after school the route to the public library is more difficult or is never taken at all. A vital function of the school library, therefore, whatever else it does and no matter how good it is, must be to pave the way to the public library as a guarantee of information and education in adulthood.

Because of their awareness of this need many progressive public libraries, mainly county libraries, have deliberate programmes of instruction for school classes in the libraries both of the schools and public service to explain their resources and how best to exploit them. For example, the Sheffield City Libraries, one of the few municipal systems giving a good service to schools, in their introductory pamphlet, *Instruction Classes for Schools*, state that the "aim of the scheme is to demonstrate the variety of services offered by the Central Library and to teach pupils the basic techniques of using a library and finding information in reference books. Many Sheffield schools now have excellent libraries of their own but pupils may come to rely too much on this single source of books. If they are given an introduction to the Public Library

[1] *Cf.* Ministry of Education, *Half our Future*, 'Newsom Report' (1963), para. 370 and 470.

early in their secondary school career it is more likely that they will go on using libraries when they leave school. Furthermore, it is essential that pupils going on to higher education should be able to find books and information independently."[1]

It is a constant call in these days that school libraries must be developed, but there is a remarkably isolationist attitude by many school-teachers: there is an impression given that only teachers are capable of judging what is suitable for a child's reading in school. It is naturally true that the teacher is best qualified to select material for immediate support of class-teaching, but it is doubtful whether he is the most suitable person to develop a balanced collection of books for the school library or, indeed, to teach the proper use of books. The co-operation of parents, which could be of immeasurable help, is seldom deemed worthy of an invitation, and the aid which the public library could offer is not utilized to the full.

One aspect of the teachers' difficulties is the need for simply written works on topics which are rapidly acquiring a technical jargon which in itself makes a study of them difficult, especially for children. The public libraries can help by their patronage to encourage the publication of such simply expressed books. Many publishers have already shown their sense of moral responsibility to the community by issuing books which may never pay the cost of their production, but which by their contents deserve publication. The library's contribution can consist of support for such efforts, and if necessary at the expense of publishers whose only aim appears to be pure commercialism.

In any event, an isolationist policy, whether it is pursued by the school or by the library, is doomed to failure, success being assured only when there is co-ordination among all the book-supplying agencies and the users.

Modern educationists are beginning not only to recognize this but to preach and practise it. The Department of Education and Science has made many references in booklets and reports to the need for co-operation between the school and public libraries.

There is sometimes a tendency to regard styles of books in compartments according to their purpose. Thus some are called 'library books' and others 'school books'. However, this brings in its train other problems. "As all school books are a preparation for

[1] Sheffield Education and Libraries and Arts Committees, *Instruction Classes for Schools in the Use of Books and Libraries* (1969), p. 1.

ordinary books, they should, as the years pass, more and more resemble them. It seems to be a mistake to have school books that are completely isolated and self-interpreting."[1]

This is a significant adjustment, and its implications can be seen sometimes in the nervous attitude of many adults who, seeking information in public libraries and presented with a volume to answer all their queries, are hesitant in its use, because it is different from the only books with which they have had close acquaintance in the past. Furthermore, there are still children who dislike school and everything associated with it, so a psychological barrier has been overcome if a potential reader has shed school books in favour of what one child described as "real books". One point in the history of rural-library service reflects the importance of disposing of legacies from school. In the early years of the county-library movement the majority of branches and centres were situated in schools: because of this accidental feature the whole service was retarded by the diffidence of adults to return to school for any purpose which savoured of learning, books, and reading.

There is a converse aspect of the statement, quoted above, from the Scottish Advisory Council's library report. If children who have attended a school without properly organized library facilities do decide, contrary to expectation and experience, to venture inside a public library after they have left school they will probably find very few books of the familiar school-book pattern. As the teacher tries in the later school years to abandon the book designed for school method in favour of those intended for more general distribution, so the public library has tended to presume that there is no use at all for the former. Numerically few readers beyond elementary-school level have any use for formal school books in a public library, but the presence of a few volumes of that type may serve to give the new, perhaps backward, reader a sense of familiarity in the midst of what can be a very bewildering and formidable array of shelves and strange titles. For this reason the libraries can do a service by maintaining even a small stock, in various subjects, of traditional school books. This may also ensure that some at least of the more popular subjects are covered by volumes written in the simplest language.

[1] Scottish Education Department: Advisory Council on Education, *Report on Libraries, Museums, and Art Galleries* (1951), para. 132.

An important duty falls to the librarian in the necessity for him to realize in his book selection the limitations set for him by the readers. Only by knowing the extent, the restricted extent of their qualifications, can he expect to choose the most suitable mode of presentation for any topic to match their abilities. The intellectual level of its readers sets the highest point of accomplishment by the library. (At the same time, of course, the librarian will guard against allowing his own limitations to prevent experts from enjoying the most advanced works on their specialist interests.)

The extreme complexity of present moral and political issues demands an education free from dictation and which can only be achieved by the study of diverse views presented in such a fashion as to suit all levels of intellectual ability. Public libraries are among the few institutions still remaining whose materials and methods are not bound by some prescribed syllabus and which can offer such a 'free' education, and which can thus serve to counteract the rigidifying unification of the nation's opinions and outlook. The library remains aloof from dogmatic education, giving all shades of opinion without bias, allowing its users to make up their own minds, to formulate their own opinions to counteract the ready-made ideas and views offered by the Press, radio, and television.

Now that the franchise is allowed to all persons over eighteen years of age it is essential that all should have an equal opportunity of improving themselves as political units and of contributing their share to the enlightened electorate which is the prerequisite of truly democratic government. Such advice was given in the Working Men's Association of London's Address to American Citizens in 1837: "Feeling satisfied that true liberty, its obligations and duties, are never appreciated by the ignorant, we seek to instruct ourselves and fellows in all that regards our political and social rights. To that end we seek to establish libraries of the best and choicest works appertaining to man and to society."[1] And much stress has been laid on this facet of library service in the United States. Ditzion describes the strongest threats to democracy as coming from ignorant classes who vote wrongly because of their "untutored choice" or by the influence of "scheming politicians", and he points out that in democracies "where every

[1] Lovett, William, *Life and Struggles of William Lovett in his Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge and Freedom* (1876), p. 132.

thought and deed affected the social mechanism of the whole, it became the interest of the whole to provide the necessary education for its parts. . . . The logic which had operated so advantageously for the protagonists of publicly supported and controlled schools were recalled to action for the free library."[1] It is in the interest of the state to have an informed body of voters; it is equally the responsibility of the state to ensure that the electorate is educated for its duties.

It comes as all the greater shock, therefore, when in the post-War United States are to be found so many traces of political censorship. In America, as much as in any other Western democracy, the narrow limits of partisanship are being used to circumscribe the material provided for the readers in the publicly operated libraries. Books have again become the scapegoats in political strife, and any which do not agree with the views of the library board are liable to be proscribed.

Progress in any field demands the defiance of past tradition, and calls for the unorthodox, even for the downright revolutionary. In a social and political system which allows only the majority viewpoint to be expressed such initiative will be stifled. The public library offers choice of attitude and viewpoint, and the often quoted hospitality of the British Museum towards Marx and other rebels is simply a crystallization of this freedom, of true toleration.

Not only has political interest become more general: the growth of government controls and involvement with people's everyday life has now become so complex that many problems present themselves at quite basic levels. There is a need for a ready accessibility to guidance on all these matters, and the public library can provide this: its substantial general-information materials support the more specialist services such as the Citizens' Advice Notes. It is unfortunate, however, as has been noted earlier, that many communities faced with the necessity of providing citizens' advice services did this either through semi-voluntary organizations or through a municipal department other than the library. In their criticism of existing local-government service the Redcliffe-Maud Commission said: "Finding out where your problems *can* be settled is frequently difficult and sometimes impossible. In county boroughs the town hall, being the office of an all-purpose authority, will as a rule be organised to give

[1] Ditzion, Sydney, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* (1947), pp. 65–66.

advice—but you must go to the town hall. There are seldom, if ever, decentralised offices where the baffled citizen can either get an answer to his problems or at least be told where he can get it. In counties, where responsibilities are divided, the position is, obviously, very much more difficult. In the relationship between local government and the public the function of the press is, clearly, of immense importance."[1] But so is that of the public library with its service points in every community of any size, and the view expressed in this Report, as in others and elsewhere among prominent figures in the highest places, leads to the suspicion that the value of the public library is simply not understood. Close acquaintance with library inquiries soon dispels the notion that there is no decentralized office to which the baffled citizen may turn.

Commercially and technically, as well as for political and social reasons, there is a need for the constant and progressive education which leads to economic gains. In this field the library's contribution lies as much in the provision of information as in continuing integrated book-reading material: thus the service relies a great deal on periodicals, occasional papers, and other materials published at random but organized as systematic resources by the library; the service to a great extent may only act as a point of contact between a searcher after information and some other body who can provide it.

Just how well public libraries are suited for this task has been stated by John G. Lorenz, Director of the Library Services Branch of the United States Office of Education.

"Public libraries are free to all and offer an availability and variety of information and educational materials which can be achieved in no other way. They provide books for the person learning to read either a first or second language. They serve the mother eager to feed and train her children properly, the farmer who wants to improve his crop, the community leader working to improve the region's water supply. As machines replace the labourer and as machines become more complex, new skills have to be learned. In libraries, workers can find information on new equipment and techniques; professional people can learn about new developments in other countries. Many communities have

[1] Royal Commission on Local Government in England, 1966–1969, *Report* (1969), vol. i, para. 97–98.

solved or made progress in eliminating particular social and economic problems and have described their experience in print or on film. Libraries can make such information available and can help prevent the waste of time, effort and money which occurs when trial and error methods are repeated over and over again without reference to the accumulated experience of the past."[1]

And the arguments for public records offices made by R. Marquant, Curator of the French National Archives, apply equally to public libraries. "Anyone who has worked for any length of time in a large government or commercial organization, or who has been responsible for listing and filing the papers of such organizations, can bear witness to the fact that all of them, in every clime and under every kind of regime, have an inveterate habit of going over the same subjects time and time again and of conducting research on subjects very similar to those already dealt with by their predecessors. Unaware of the existence of these earlier studies, they spend much time and money on tasks which could be shortened considerably by consulting the archives to see what has already been done. For example, a great deal of time and money was saved when preliminary studies were being undertaken for the construction of a large dam in Africa simply because the archivist at Brazzaville was able to collect and hand over to the authorities a whole series of earlier reports whose existence had been completely forgotten."[2]

Modern business and industry are so complex, intricate, and specialized in their administration and techniques that each system calls for instruction methods peculiarly appropriate to it. Nowadays the specialist is forced, by rapid technical development and competition, to revise the studies of his earlier years in order to maintain his professional status. Such tuition may be often most usefully found in the books and periodicals of his profession or trade. Again, because of its wide resources and because of economic considerations, the public library is best suited to cater for this need, and Glasgow Public Libraries, for example, have operated their commercial service since 1916.

Industrial concerns in this country are at present badly equipped with technical libraries. While the larger ones usually have good collections, the great majority of firms are small, and often cannot

[1] *Unesco Bulletin for Libraries* (September–October, 1962), p. 227.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

afford to maintain for themselves the information services they require to advance their techniques.

Even now, with industry vital to the economic survival of this country, it is surprising how neglected its information services still are. The public library, therefore, has a special duty to take out its services to industrial concerns, especially the smaller ones less likely to have their own information resources. Dr Urquhart, of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, suggested book-lending to firms, as opposed to lending to individuals. Thus the firm would take the responsibility for the books, and would benefit from their use by more people than those immediately concerned with their special topics.[1] The National Lending Library's excellent services make the work of the public library even easier, for now the firms may use these services either direct or through the agency of the local library. An important function of the public library in this field lies in identifying the need of the particular firm and even in specifying the particular books, periodicals, or other relevant guides to the information required.

The necessity for the public library has now been almost universally agreed by national governments, and in some cases the control of the public library has passed to a national ministry or department. In Britain, where the co-operation among libraries has been exemplary, the central government has not shown any desire to remove the libraries from the jurisdiction of local authorities, though periodically a voice is raised to proclaim the benefits of such a change.[2] Often the motive in the latter is to gain some recognition of the principle that public libraries should receive financial aid from the appropriate government department. The most generally accepted view in the matter of the libraries' relations with the Government is that the interest, at least, of a central ministry should now gradually be showing itself to be beneficial, but to preserve the democratic and local character of the libraries and to prevent any unilateral dictation of policy,

[1] Urquhart, D. J., *Public Libraries and Industry* (1953), p. 3.

[2] *E.g.*, Northern Ireland, Departmental Committee on Libraries, *Report* (1929), para. 95. Cooke, A. S., editor, *County Libraries Manual* (1935), pp. 21–22. Library Association, *The Public Library Service: its Post-war Reorganization and Development* (1943), para. 17. Scottish Education Department: Advisory Council on Education, *Report on Libraries, Museums, and Art Galleries* (1951), para. 177 and 183.

constant vigilance on behalf of the local authorities would be necessary; this is the duty of the local-authority associations and the Library Association.

Lest it be thought that governmental control is always regarded as being synonymous with the disappearance of the smaller authority, it should be remembered that some national schemes for libraries, among them the Dutch and Danish, have encouraged the preservation of the independent local libraries, only directing them in such matters as might cause a conflict between the local organization and the central plan for the whole country. This too was the plan advocated by the Library Association in its 1943 proposals for the post-War reorganization and development of the public-library service.

It is significant that the beneficial influence of the British library movement has not been confined to direct effects. Throughout the world, within the Commonwealth and outside it, libraries have found the high standard of British-trained staffs to be of the utmost value in their advancement, and tributes have been paid to this function of our libraries.

Commercial life has also benefited from some by-products of library service, among them the systems and techniques of filing, cataloguing, and display. These have been developed in library use to an excellence which has resulted in their extensive adoption and application in the business world.

The value of the public library in the improvement of the mind lies mainly in the width of its provision and in the liberty it offers its users. It is a means of comprehensive and continuous instruction; it is free from authoritarian direction, and is untouched by the unifying patterns of formal education. It is an inspiration and incentive to free ideas and opinions.

8 *The Library for Recreation*

Present-day living offers to the whole community an extended leisure time which in the past was the privilege of only the wealthy minority. Welcome as this opportunity for recreation and refreshment is, many people are still unable to occupy their spare time effectively and thus find themselves bored: this is a serious aspect of community behaviour, so that any contribution from the public library towards the effective use of leisure time must be regarded equally seriously. It is a happy result of shorter working hours that further education should be extending so rapidly, with a proportionate increased demand on public libraries.

"But though the public library has an important function to perform in relation to educational institutions, its activities travel beyond assistance to formal education. It exists to serve the needs of a public with varied interests. It must satisfy the requirements of the serious student; but it must also cater for that large class of people who are 'general readers', and those who go to books for recreation." The Adult Education Committee Report on Libraries and Museums in 1919, from which this quotation is taken, goes on to refer to the "unsystematic and recreative reading which the libraries have stimulated". "The line between education and recreation or between reading with a definite object and reading for pleasure cannot be drawn in actual practice."[1]

Nevertheless, this chapter, in contrast with the last, will try to deal especially with the reader who does not set out deliberately for intellectual profit but wishes to entertain himself, to give himself pleasure in his spare time. Whatever good accrues from the purposeful study of educational literature, there can be no doubt that the bulk of public-library reading is of a recreational

[1] Ministry of Reconstruction, *Third Interim Report of the Adult Education Committee, Libraries and Museums* (1919), p. 6.

nature, of fiction and other light material, in which case much of the significance of the library will depend on the effect of such books. As noted earlier, the Departmental Committee in 1927 recognized that intellectual improvement is not a *sine qua non* of useful reading in rural areas. It is reasonable to make the same claim for readers in towns; it is enough that the reader is made happier by reading.

The reader may find intellectual gain in his reading for entertainment, but that is not his initial aim. It is not possible to separate categorically books that profit the reader intellectually from those that provide pure entertainment, since it is the purpose of the reader which determines which books shall fall into each class. Thus one man in reading Plato may find him burdensome, perhaps because he is compelled to study this author, while another may seek out his work for the joy of it.

Anyone wishing to examine further the purposes of reading with particular attention to determining the distinctions between reading for work or leisure will find reward in a study of *A Sociological Model for the Study of Book Reading* in *Books and Reading*, by Mann and Burgoyne.[1]

A primary benefit to be derived from the reading of light literature is that it provides an attractive way of improving basic reading skills. Again, this may be derived quite unconsciously and quite unintentionally, but the advantage of having such skills may be judged conversely from the penalties of illiteracy. It is thus incumbent upon public libraries to provide this easy and pleasant source of reading training, and it is especially important that children and young people should have a wide range of literature from which to draw their recreational reading, so that they may have sufficient attractive practice in the mechanics that there will be no strain when more serious reading has to be undertaken.

It is sometimes complained that reading is not a sociable pastime, in that it draws people away from conversation and the other companionable occupations of society. Whatever comment may be made on its sociability, there can be no denying the social value of reading, and some evidence of this may be found in the place of reading in family life. Since it is obvious that the latter is no longer regarded as a centre around which the individual members enjoy their entertainments, anything which tends to help

[1] Mann, P. H., and Burgoyne, J. L., *op. cit.* (1969), Chapter 3.

to maintain it as such is praiseworthy. Apart perhaps from television-watching, which itself is not a particularly sociable occupation, the sports and recreations of today tend to draw people away from the home, and are the negation of family life. Reading is an activity which can be enjoyed at home, and library provision is thus a possible bond to strengthen home and family, the most intimate units of society.

In the nineteenth century it was sometimes asserted that one of the influences of the public library was to tempt men away from their homes.[1] The only time nowadays when this would appear to have validity is when home conditions are bad enough for the man to wish an alternative—*e.g.*, when the home is overcrowded or shared with another family. This is an aspect of library service which deserves consideration, for the library does provide congenial conditions for study or relaxation when these are difficult to obtain at home. In these circumstances, however, it is no criticism of the library that it takes the reader out of his home: the criticism is to be levelled against the conditions which make this necessary.

It is, of course, sometimes argued that while light reading is worthy of encouragement it should not be the duty of the public library to provide it. In the Republic of Ireland, for example, the government's Library Council, which is responsible for authorizing subsidies to public libraries for capital projects, may do this in respect of buildings, vehicles, and books but in considering the last it is laid down that fiction in English will not rank for subsidy except that all children's books qualify, as does reference stock.

It has been argued too, particularly by some authors of fiction, that their books should not be lent from public libraries without some levy on the readers to pay additional royalties to the authors. (This topic is discussed in the next chapter.) Nevertheless, as the early advocates of public libraries and universal education pointed out, it is in the best interests of the community to encourage innocent entertainment for the public. It is this same aim which has been responsible for the modern drive to make ample provision of playing-fields for the young and pleasant parks and gardens for the older people. In the one case the provision is for the physical welfare, and in the case of light reading in libraries it is for the

[1] Manners, Lady John, *Some of the Advantages of Easily Accessible Reading and Recreation Rooms and Free Libraries* (1885), p. 84.

good of the mind; in both cases it is an effort to provide wholesome occupation of leisure time.

In Sweden the need to canalize the spare-time activities, especially of adolescents and young adults, has been clearly recognized, and in Gothenburg practical steps have been taken by the public library, which has extended its hours of opening to the public deliberately to afford further accessibility to something worth while, a good library service, whether it is used as a useful occupation or simply as a relaxing pastime. A similar attitude in Britain is to be found in the provision by Lincoln Public Library from a local benefaction of an activities room for young people.

In the same way as the athlete will concentrate on a sport in which he excels and which he enjoys, so will the reader pursue a line of reading which he finds of special interest. By so doing he does not dissipate his energies, but absorbs the fullest benefits from the particular author or study which took his fancy. In this matter the library is of great use, for when a course of reading is set and enforced, as in school or college, there is not the enthusiasm for it which would be found if the reader himself had browsed among a variety of subjects and found himself drawn to this particular one by sheer interest in it. The library offers the variety, and the reader steers his own course. This aspect is of special importance in the case of children, as has been demonstrated by the antipathy to the recognized classics which are forced on children at school. If the child is allowed to wander around the shelves for a month or two choosing just what he pleases the time will come when he has found his own type of book, and the benefits he will derive from it shall be as great as, or greater than, any prescribed reading.

The growing proportion of old people in the population gave rise to hopes among librarians that there might be more time to deal with the proportionately fewer children who would be using the libraries. However, they had not bargained for the fact that children's libraries since the 1930's have steadily become more and more popular with the children, and with parents on behalf of their children. The result is that any hopes the librarians may have cherished of dealing with more quality for fewer readers have been banished, and the problem remains of handling a demand greater than the supply.

Among the many arguments put up against the provision of

light materials in public libraries is the one that it does not offer instruction which should characterize them, or the one which complains that some modern novels are not written in the fine English of past generations. It must be agreed that many books published at the present time do not have the flow of language to encourage their readers towards better speech and writing, and this is to be regretted. However, the matter does not end there, since the books have important missions, even if their language is not the stuff of which the classics are made. It is often in such books that characters and situations appear which are familiar to the readers; and the more closely literature becomes identified with its reader the greater is the benefit it confers on that reader. Furthermore, if the sentiments and actions of the characters are too far divorced from reality the reader may gain little from the book.

There seems to be a readiness on the part of society to divide 'educated' culture from 'pop' culture, to elevate the former and to regard the latter as inferior, if it is regarded as culture at all. In the same way as the public library shows a hospitality and concern for non-conformist points of view in philosophy and politics, for example, so equally should it extend its catholic attitude to embrace artists and writers in the field of experimental cultural activity.

Reading is sought as a confirmation of a man's own experience or as an escape from it. The fiction literature reflecting current ideas cannot reasonably be excluded from the public library, and nowhere, except in television perhaps, is the escape provided more thoroughly than in fiction. However, the reader will not be willing readily to accept any confusion of the confirmation of experience with the escape from it.

We may be prepared to accept the most remarkable flights of fancy on every page, but when there is undue confusion of the fiction with the reality it is immediately suspect. In fiction the reader likes to recognize his situations as familiar and possible, or he must see them as the truly fabulous. When behaviour is recognized as being in accordance with the practice of the reader's own social group, whether it is proper behaviour or not in the eyes of society, he will assess the situation against the background of his own experience, and thus become intellectually active in the solution of a social problem.

Very often it will be much easier for a moral to be conveyed in

fiction than in other literary forms. Where the author can draw on the fullest emotions to portray the rising climax and final dénouement he is much more likely to impress his reader than would the strictly scientific adviser writing in formal style. This may account for the fact that fiction so much more often shocks its readers than does factual material. An example is seen in the effect of Dickens's novels on Victorian society. Unmoved as it had been by the protests of the social workers and political speakers, it could not fail to respond to the claims of the Dickensian characters.

A difficulty does arise with fiction-reading where the person does not sufficiently distinguish between reality and fantasy, and where he may seek to personify the character of some undesirable in the book. Books are now being criticized in the same way as the cinema was blamed for delinquency before the War. Although it is unhappily true that some criminals in recent years have referred to books, both of fiction and non-fiction, which have influenced them, there is little general positive evidence that literature corrupts. As seems to happen generation after generation, it is largely from non-reading sections of the community that the delinquents are drawn. In his study of delinquency, based on 102 lads between the ages of fifteen and eighteen at an Approved School, D. H. Stott found that nearly half, 45 of them, had a marked dislike for reading; in the others this dislike was not present, or was not observed. The extreme restlessness and excitement-seeking hyperactivity of these boys were in direct contrast to the pastime of reading.[1]

Another argument used against the public-library provision of light literature is that which condemns it as 'dope'. The difficulty here lies in deciding whether any sedative is desirable; it is now recognized as inevitable in the strain of modern living that many of the ailments, even those apparently physical, are due to neuroses, and that a substantial number of all the prescriptions dispensed today are for drugs of a sedative nature. Is there a case then against the public library with its modest contribution towards the mental health of the community? Never were the anxieties of ordinary people greater than they are at the present time. Perhaps Sir J. Y. W. MacAlister's remarks at the end of the nineteenth century are even more appropriate now than they were when he

[1] Stott, D. H., *Delinquency and Human Nature* (1950), pp. 28, 236, 292, and 295.

made them. "Let us be honest with our public, and assert that the recreation side of our libraries in these days of over-strain and hurry is one of the most important and valuable."[1]

The recreational side of public-library reading is not, of course, confined to fiction, or enjoyed solely for plot or subject-matter. Some of the most stimulating literature is scarcely interested in plot and hardly derives any of its importance from subject: these are the pieces of writing which give pleasure through their fine phraseology, by the exquisite use of language. Once again the library can offer escape for people whose lives are unlightened by other aesthetic experiences. Not only in fiction, but in all belles-lettres and poetry are opportunities for the reader to find delights of beautiful word-music. Anyone who makes the acquaintance of such books, and realizes for himself the greatness of their literature, is spiritually enriched, morally recreated, and intellectually reinforced.

It is now being more widely recognized among laymen that the achievement of emotional stability is a prerequisite of any search for intellectual advancement. Accordingly, it is only proper that the public library should seek to give a service which contributes to the relaxation necessary as a contrast with intensive study or heavy responsibility, and cases are well known to most librarians of eminent scholars or other professional men whose only public-library borrowing consists of escapist literature.

Stott quoted one extreme case of escapism among the boys he studied. The lad's mother described him as "a very restless boy—unless he'd got an interesting book, then you couldn't shift him at all". Stott found that "in his passion for reading he was rather an exception among my avoidance cases, for most of them found that even reading needed too much concentration. However, he was above average intelligence, so that the purely mechanical act of reading needed no concentration or effort; and he read exclusively thrillers. Undoubtedly they were to him just another of those attention-filling activities sought after by all who are afraid of their own thoughts."[2]

Carnegie was businessman enough to recognize the need for emotional stability, and at the opening of the Peterhead Public

[1] *Transactions and Proceedings of the Second International Library Conference held in London*, (July 13–16, 1897), p. 11.

[2] Stott, D. H., *Delinquency and Human Nature* (1950), p. 17.

Library said, "Fiction is important for emotional relief to workers' tedium."[1] And in his *The Empire of Business* he defended again the public libraries which catered for this need. "It is no disparagement of free libraries that most of the works read are works of fiction. On the contrary, it is doubtful if any other form of literature would as well serve the important end of lifting hard-working men out of the prosaic and routine duties of life."[2]

On a tablet outside the St Louis Public Library is recorded Carnegie's belief in the activating effect of books. "I choose free libraries as the best agencies for improving the masses of the people because they only help those who help themselves."

It was in this field of occupying, as opposed to wasting, leisure that the social importance of public libraries seems first to have been realized generally. A century ago Monckton Milnes spoke of the help that public libraries even then might give to the workless. Referring to evidence given before the 1849 Public Libraries Committee (on which he served), he said: "I am not aware that any one sentence touched me more than the evidence given, if I remember rightly, by some person intimately connected with the manufacturing districts, that books were a good deal more sought for and read by artisans when they had short time and less work than when they were in full employment. I own I thought I saw in this more than met the eye. I saw that it was possible for the artisan not enjoying the full produce of his strength and labour, to find at least some consolation for the increased difficulties and self-denial to which he was subject in communing with the minds of others through the various channels of literature, and deriving perhaps comfort and advantage for himself in seeing how other men had toiled and suffered before him, and beginning to hope for the future time by seeing how full of glorious prospects this world is for the good and industrious man."[3]

Proof of this was certainly found in the Lancashire cotton depression caused by the American Civil War. R. W. Smiles, the Manchester Librarian, reported that "during the winter of 1861–2 the accommodation in the reference library was found inadequate for the number of readers, every table being completely surrounded, and every chair occupied, a number of youths

[1] Ditzion, Sydney, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* (1947), p. 153.
[2] *Op. cit.* (1902), pp. 84–85.
[3] Credland, W. R., *The Manchester Public Free Libraries* (1899), p. 16.

accommodating themselves by sitting on the warming pipes, where they were to be seen in rows on each side of the room every evening". "Instead of sinking into a condition of utter despair under the cruelty of their sufferings, thousands of the factory hands passed their days in the reading rooms of the Free Libraries, and by the reading of books or papers diverted their attention for a time from their distress, or possibly were directed to the means of alleviating it."[1]

In the same way during the same period American public libraries had found that unemployment stimulated an increased use of their services by the workless.

Again, the grave employment troubles of the depression years, 1925–35, forced upon many an unwanted idleness, which was borne more easily because of library provision. It gave the unemployed a pastime which stemmed the dispiriting force of their misfortune: they were given an alternative to lounging idly about the street-corner. Many of the more self-reliant and resourceful members of the workless used the time of their enforced idleness so to improve their technical skills that when happier times did bring renewed work they were all the better equipped to do it.[2]

Thomson in his *Effect of Literature* emphasized the need created in a man by the want of some definite object, such as his employment, "in consequence of which the mind becomes listless and torpid, or is left a prey to the influence of evil habits, assisted, as they are, by the working of the imagination, which is apt to fly to any pursuit that can relieve it from the irksomeness arising through want of occupation and excitement. Literature counteracts this evil (even when it fails to excite the individual to more than the passive enjoyment of it), by producing an agreeable play of imagination, and widening the range of objects with which the mind is conversant, so as to divert it from those low habits or sordid pursuits into which people often fall, from no other cause than the want of some other employment."[3]

[1] Credland, W. R., *The Manchester Public Free Libraries* (1899), pp. 100–101.

[2] *Cf.* Mitchell, J. M., in *Library Association Record* (December 1933), pp. 368–373. Smith, R. D. Hilton, in *Library Association Record* (December 1934), pp. 435–440, and Sharp, H. A., *Libraries and Librarianship in America* (1936), pp. 74–75.

[3] Thomson, Robert, *op. cit.* (1834), p. 243.

The existence of very large numbers of people unable to enjoy the usual privileges of entertainment—*e.g.*, the unemployed—was ample justification for the supply of light literature by the libraries. Even in these comparatively affluent times, there remain many who cannot afford to buy as many books as they would like. Among those are the old. Naturally many older people may try to continue their studies, hobbies, and other interests of their earlier years, but an even greater number will be forced to confine themselves to recreational reading of the lightest character. The public library's duty to those who are no longer able to enjoy the pastimes of their youth, or who are perhaps even prevented from leaving their homes, is obvious; it must provide an ample supply of books suitable, in subject-interest and in physical make-up, for the old.

The provision of light literature for the old may present its problems: the normal standards applied to the acquisitions of the library may have to be waived for the simple reason that the intellectual content of much reading by the old will probably be at a lower level than they sought when younger, and inevitably it is found that many of the books are of correspondingly low literary value. Notwithstanding, their value socially in the restoration of morale to the aged is considerable, offering reassurance that they are not shut out from normal pursuits. The value must be recognized too of large-print books—*e.g.*, the Ulverscroft series—in allowing the old and near-blind to continue their reading; inevitably the content of such books must be popular, but it is particularly reassuring to note nevertheless that the titles published are not exclusively of the lightest kind.

In such services for the old the public library may also help to offset the notion in the minds of many of them, perhaps justifiably, that an unduly large share of the country's resources is lavished on the young.

Mention has been made in Chapter 5 of the modern tendency to accept entertainment rather than to create it and participate in it. This is most obviously manifested by the great following which is enjoyed by the mass media, the cinema, radio, and television, and by the vast sports industry, all of which encourage mental laziness.

The fact that the reader *participates* in reading a book means that no-one else can critically assess the value of a book to a reader. The critic cannot say, "This is fiction; therefore it is trash," for

he does not know the effect of the book on the reader. There are cases where light fiction—apparently of little worth—has been of value as a source of comfort, and sometimes even of inspiration, to people who could never have derived the same benefits from the universally recognized classics of literature. Such material thus sustains the interest of the less literary-inclined of readers, though in his selection of fiction the librarian naturally tries to provide books which offer more than a means of passing time.

A generation saturated with the cinema, and now absorbed by television, can scarcely avoid mental stagnation and laziness of vocabulary unless some attractive alternative is offered. Already the tendencies are to be seen in the production and popularity of 'digests', some of which it must be admitted, however, are attractive and adequately edited. The potentialities of these abridgments and of the cinema and television are most suitable for the present age, when so little time is set aside for meditation or other quiet pursuits. The long novel is rapidly being replaced by a shorter, more 'active' type, and thus again there is a contribution to the disappearance of another leisurely aspect of literature—the gradual development of character over a long period: the modern media have not the time to do this, and lack an essential element, therefore, of character-study. A long novel can describe action, thought, and personality; any medium which is set, or sets itself, short time-limits must, on the other hand, depend largely on action alone; it is deprived of the time in which to cover the detail of a complex plot in its entirety. The things which make a novel are fully described for the reader; more often than not the modern novelette, the cinema, and radio programmes are forced to content themselves with the motives and immediate emotions which can be conveyed through their results and complications. If some literature and much of the work of other media seems melodramatic it is not so much the fault of its producer's methods with it as his choice of means to express it in the first place, means which by their nature are bound to produce immediate and striking results and which are denied the slow revelation of a leisurely literary plot. In the preservation and encouragement of such literary work the library animates thought and character-study of a higher level than that inspired by quicker-acting media—the cinema, television, and the novelette.

The cinema began, and continues to exist, for *commercial*

reasons. The public library is cultural, existing for mental and spiritual rather than direct financial profits; it can afford to maintain higher moral standards than its commercial competitors. Radio broadcasting has been a monopoly in Britain for almost half a century, with the exception of the brief period of activity by the various 'pop' pirate stations in the mid-1960's. The library is a democratic organization in which the least important reader (if there is such a person) can have a say in the essential feature of its administration, its book selection.

Sound radio has many features of the cinema and television, though not to the same degree; there is slightly more concentration needed if the message is to be fully accepted, only one faculty, hearing, having to convey all the information. Alas, it is found very often that the contrary is the case. Rather than devote the necessary thought to a programme the listener merely uses it as background noise, and despite the B.B.C.'s praise for the attentive listener, it is prepared to provide, deliberately, programmes aimed at the careless, 'half-an-ear' listener, the type of programme condemned when it was provided by the pirate radio stations but easily adopted by the B.B.C. when the opportunity presented itself.

Many persons naturally prefer the attractions of cinema and radio simply because they do not call for any serious reciprocal contribution, and if these two media have lost any of their following it has not been to library use but to television. The number of books borrowed annually from British public libraries is about 650 millions. Annual cinema attendances are still high at 270 millions, although at their peak after the War they reached 1600 millions.

The advent of transistors has stimulated the ownership of radio sets, and very many young people own their personal portables. *Radio Times* has a weekly circulation of over 4,000,000, and it is estimated that more than half the population of Britain read it.

In comparison with these other means of communication one aspect of library service has not yet been stressed: the library is preservative of almost permanent records, *artium omnium conservatrix*. The other media are transitory. Even when they do act as conservators of their materials, these are not readily available as are books, for the former need mechanical contrivances to present them. Books are readily accessible through the public

libraries, and are, with the reader's co-operation, self-contained and self-sufficient.

The public library through its books of entertainment and recreation encourages reading for pleasure, with a consequent development of better spoken and written language, and with the result that more precise and active thought is stimulated. Though other media have some advantages over books, the library need not regard them as competitors only, since from a co-operation of all communication methods society can derive an increased benefit from all.

Because the library is co-operative in its attitudes and because it is a centre of cultural stimulus it has become in many places also a practical centre of cultural activity. Much of this work of the library is as a focal point for the arts, including music and drama as well as the purely visual arts; it is thus largely in the recreational field. Where there is no deliberate educational content in these arts services it may be in the library's best interest to be a catalyst for other organizations, more a sponsor than the direct provider. Here again, however, it is so difficult to distinguish between education and pure recreation that a very strong case can be made for the extensive cultural activities undertaken by some of the larger public libraries. In the light of the current stimulation of interest in the arts, both informally and by government spokesmen, there seems little doubt that the libraries' function as a cultural centre will expand rapidly.

9 *Payment to Authors*

Until recently it has been an unassailable principle of the public library in Britain that its services to the community should be free. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 confirmed this in its section 8, the only charges permitted to a library authority being those to another authority and those to readers as penalties for keeping books for longer than the specified loan-period and as fees for services over and above the routine facilities. This freedom from charges was repeatedly upheld by the 1966 Labour government, largely in the person of Jennie Lee. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, some authors have protested that it is only proper that some sort of charge should be made on readers for the use of their books in public libraries, and there have been significant efforts to establish a system of charges on public libraries, on the readers individually or on the libraries corporately, in payment of the so-called "Public Lending Right".

The first public expression of this idea to be considered seriously in this country was proposed by John Brophy in an open letter in the summer 1951 issue of *The Author*, the periodical of the Society of Authors.[1] This was *A Proposal to Increase Authors' Incomes through the Libraries*, and basically the innovation was to consist of a borrowing fee to be paid by the reader each time a volume was taken out; the fee suggested was a penny. Brophy used the example of the author with four books in each of 5000 British library service points, each of them borrowed ten times per year: this author's income would be increased by £667 per annum, allowing for an administration cost of 20 per cent of the gross income.

He also suggested that, "if the proposal finds favour, the Society of Authors should forthwith, by an *ad hoc* committee or

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 99–102.

otherwise, address itself to two specific tasks: to draft a practicable scheme of administration and to discover and pursue the best means of carrying the scheme into effect, either by written agreement with the libraries or, if necessary, by Act of Parliament". Brophy outlined a system for the collection of the fees and admitted that "opposition may be expected from librarians who will not welcome the necessity of re-organisation and extra work, and who will probably demonstrate the normal human reaction to a new idea". He also saw that the argument would be put that "libraries already render a great service to authors, especially to young authors, many of whom would not be published at all but for their publisher's reliance on library orders. This is true, but the libraries do it not to please authors but to please their paying customers; the benefit is mutual." In the latter case he was referring to commercial subscription libraries, but the argument is similarly valid in the case of public libraries.

Brophy noted the argument that the author has already received a royalty payment for each book bought for the library, but emphasized that in a library it is not only the purchase of the book which is involved but all the succeeding transactions, the repeated loans of the book for which the author should be paid. "A penny a time is not too much to ask," he concluded.

The "Brophy Penny" was adopted by the Society of Authors, among whose members was Sir Alan Herbert, who henceforth became the leading exponent of what he called "Public Lending Right". With the publication of the Roberts Report in 1959 he took up the cause most strenuously, until in 1960 he issued a book on the subject, *Public Lending Right; Authors, Publishers and Libraries*. In the meantime the Society of Authors, with the support of the Publishers Association, had sought discussions with the Library Association, who had rejected the overtures.

With the presentation of a Libraries (Public Lending Right) Bill to Parliament towards the end of 1960, the Library Association published their case against the Bill. While much of the argument against the Bill was reasonable some of the Library Association's case was clumsy, to say the least. Their reluctance to discuss the subject with the authors was equally inept and, if anything, gave support to the Lending Right exponents. The Bill was talked out and came to nought, but this did nothing to suppress Herbert's enthusiasm for the cause.

He expounded the case further in the Hobart Paper 19, *Libraries: Free-for-all*, issued by the Institute of Economic Affairs in 1962. Included was an outline of the events to date, a commentary on the current state of the libraries and a consideration of "the three deficiencies" for which additional money was needed—namely, the service to readers, the librarians, and the authors and publishers. Taking the use of his own books in his local library as an example, he showed the considerable use of the books, 3600 times in 20 years, with a royalty yield of about 3*s*. per year.

With the return to power in 1964 of a new Government and the appointment of Jennie Lee as a Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department of Education and Science, the Society of Authors saw a new ally. In 1967 she invited Lord Goodman and the Arts Council to produce a plan for the operation of a Lending Right scheme, and although this was ready in the same year, little action was possible because of the financial stringency then applied by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Late in 1968 the Society of Authors published their first *Pocket Brief for PLR*. After stating what PLR is, the *Brief* gave a justification for it. This was followed by a description of the arrangements to compile a register of qualifying books and their authors and for the appropriate payments to be made. This was rather an unwieldy scheme based on sampling public libraries' stocks, and it is to the credit of the Society of Authors that they sought an alternative which would not impose such a burden on library-catalogue use.

Thus, towards the end of 1970, they submitted to the Department of Education and Science their new plan which was published later in a second *Pocket Brief for PLR* which contained a scheme based on in-copyright books sold to public libraries. The proposal was for a royalty of 15 per cent (three-quarters to go to the authors and a quarter to the publishers) at a total cost of about £2,000,000 to be paid from Central Government funds.

However, early in 1971, the Minister responsible for the Arts, Lord Eccles, advised the Society for Authors that he could not accept their suggestions and that instead he proposed an amendment of the copyright legislation which would recognize lending to the public as an act to be governed by copyright.

Since the Society's *Pocket Brief* stated their case succinctly, the greater part of it is quoted below:

"PUBLIC LENDING RIGHT

"What is PLR?

"Public Lending Right or PLR is the claim by authors and publishers to receive remuneration *as of right* for the use of their books in the Public Libraries of Great Britain. PLR means *payment for use.*

"Is PLR justified?

"The claim for PLR is based on the principle of copyright—the law which protects authors and publishers in regard to literary property. Ever since the first Copyright Act of 1709, legislation has been introduced and extended to meet the many changes affecting the means by which an author communicates his work to the public—books, plays, films, radio/TV, discs, tapes, cassettes, etc. In this way the author is enabled to take advantage of each new technical development, and to benefit by the repeated use of his work.

"PLR comes within this category. From a stock of 82 million books in public libraries, over 650 million loans were made in 1969, representing an average of eight loans per book per year. This constitutes a form of copyright use which ought, as a matter of justice, to be recognised in law. This is the principle upon which PLR rests.

"Free Libraries?

"PLR should not be confused with the question of library charges. This is a separate issue—one for *all citizens* to decide through their representatives in Parliament. Authors and publishers—the producers of books—are solely concerned with their claim to be paid for the *use* of their property. So long as they are not so paid, then they are being called upon to subsidise the Public Library Service to a greater extent than any other section of the community. THIS IS EXPLOITATION. Finding the money for PLR is the responsibility of the Government—and how that is done does not affect the justice of the claim.

[Here follows the scheme rejected by Lord Eccles.]

"ARGUMENTS

"A. It is argued that there is no need for PLR on the grounds that the author is sufficiently reimbursed already through the sale of the copy (or copies) of his book to the Public Library in the first place.

HE IS NOT. A library copy can survive fifty or more issues,

be rebound and survive another fifty. From this repeated use the author received only a single royalty payment, and the publisher a comparable sum, deriving from the original sale. THIS IS UNJUST.

"B. It is argued that a Public Library has the right to do what it likes with a book once it has bought it. The case, it is said, is no different from a firm that hires out television sets or refrigerators; such a firm pays nothing more to the manufacturer once the original purchase has been made, no matter how many times it hires out the machine.

WRONG. A book is not a chattel in this sense. When you buy a book, you cannot under the law of copyright do what you like with it. For example, you cannot convert it into a film or a play, or read instalments on the radio, or reproduce substantial extracts, without permission and without making additional payment. In this way you are recompensing the author and the publisher, who made the book available to the public, for the further use of their creation.

There is a parallel example in Public Performing Right. When a dramatist writes a play—or a composer a symphony—both he and his publisher receive a fee every time it is performed, additional to the payment received from the sale of the work in print. In essence there is no difference between Public Performance and Public Lending. Both are forms of repeated use, from each of which the creators of the work are entitled to benefit.

"C. Public Libraries say that they are important buyers of books. Without their purchases, some authors—particularly specialists and scholars—would not get published at all.

TRUE BUT IRRELEVANT. Authors and publishers value Public Libraries very highly, and they regard Public Librarians as their natural allies in communicating literature to the Public. But that is no argument against PLR. Public Libraries are part of the cultural service of this country, and their purchasing of books (especially those of specialist appeal) is part of their function, properly to be borne by the community as a whole and not at the expense of one section of it.

"D. Why should Publishers participate in PLR?

BECAUSE the Publisher is the essential partner of the creator of an original work. He risks his judgment, his capital and his

reputation in disseminating the work of his author, and earns, by contract with the author, an agreed share in the legitimate proceeds of that work. The author is willing to grant rights to his publisher because without him he could scarcely hope to reap any reward at all; nor could the public benefit from his work.

"E. What then is the next step?

The next step must be taken by the Government. The new PLR proposals were forwarded by the Arts Council to Lord Eccles, Minister with special responsibility for the Arts, in October 1970. We await action. The need to put PLR on the Statute Book is long overdue.

"THIS IS A MATTER OF COMMON JUSTICE."

Almost simultaneously with the publication of the original *Pocket Brief* the Library Association issued their statement on the proposals for a Public Lending Right as follows:

"1. Increases in book prices have been considerable in recent years. According to *The Bookseller* the average price of new books and new editions in the half-year July to December 1967 had increased by 82 per cent over the corresponding half-year in 1959. The average price for the half-year January to June 1968 had increased by 98 per cent over the corresponding half-year in 1960. It is difficult to see why the publishers cannot make provision for better rewards for most authors out of this source. The fixing of prices is entirely in the hands of the publisher and it is true to say that, in the long run, libraries must buy at the prices which the publisher fixes. If any particular price increase is made in order to ensure an adequate return to the author, it would be acceptable to most libraries.

"2. The Library Association recognizes, however, that certain meritorious works may not be economically viable, and it is in favour of State grants to their authors. We are not, however, persuaded that the need for these grants should be based on the use which libraries make of authors' books.

"3. The basis of the authors' case is that library lending reduces the sale of their books. This may be true of established best-sellers whose works are sought eagerly by the public on publication. But it is not true of the majority of authors, who are not best-sellers. If the public had to buy rather than to borrow, their choice would certainly fall upon authors whose work was known to them and

liked by them. They would not risk the high price of a book upon new authors who were wholly unknown to them. In fact the figures put forward by the proponents of Public Lending Right themselves seem to show that most new authors would never reach print but for the established demand of the libraries, whose book fund is large enough to enable them to provide a wide range of choice. For example, in "Public Lending Right", a preliminary memorandum submitted by A. P. Herbert to the Society of Authors in March 1960, it is stated that, if a first novel by a new novelist is printed in three thousand copies, over 80 per cent of the copies sold in the home market will be bought by libraries.

"4. Libraries make a major contribution to the spread of the reading habit. This must benefit all authors in the long run and increase the number of books sold. For it is not correct to regard book readers as being in two separate classes—buyers and borrowers of books. Such surveys as have been carried out seem to indicate that most of the book buyers are book borrowers too. For example, the Society of Young Publishers carried out a survey of Londoners' book habits in 1959 (published in *Books, the Journal of the National Book League*, January–February 1960, pp. 7–22). This survey showed that 58 per cent of those members questioned who had bought a book within the last fortnight were library users; and that 22 per cent of library users had bought a book within the last fortnight. The survey concluded: 'This hardly suggests that libraries discourage book buying.'

"5. The proposal to include publishers in the scope of the subsidy seems particularly open to objection. The publisher is not the only person, other than the author, concerned in the production and marketing of a book. If the publisher is included in the benefit of a subsidy, the bookseller and the printer may also have a claim—and that claim may be stronger in that it is the publisher who controls the selling price and fixes his own profit margin.

"6. If subsidies for authors are approved, these should not be related to the use of their books in public libraries, and the numbers of books stocked or issued should not enter into the calculation of the subsidies."[1]

Jennie Lee's sympathy for a scheme of Public Lending Right was seen further in meetings arranged between the Department of

[1] *Library Association Record* (December 1968), p. 322.

Education and Science and interested parties, the authors, publishers, libraries, and local-authority associations, and also in the consideration given to the matter by the Library Advisory Councils for England and Wales in 1969. Following the change of Government in 1970, the Society of Authors continued their activity on Public Lending Right, Lord Eccles, the Paymaster-General, having expressed some sympathy for an alteration in copyright legislation, but no solution satisfactory to all parties appears imminent.

The main question is whether any scheme of Public Lending Right payments would be in the public interest, in the interest of the public libraries, or, indeed, in the interest of most authors. It seems significant that most of the protestations for such payments have come from already successful authors. Since any scheme of payments to authors relating to the use of their books in public libraries is of vital importance to the libraries, the question is now briefly discussed.

The value of books is recognized by all thinking people. Even those who do not consistently use books must recognize their value in this country's economic drive, between 40 and 50 per cent of the British production of books being exported. It is reasonable, therefore, that a healthy book trade be maintained, and this automatically presupposes encouragement to authors. Apart from the economic problems of who pays and how, there seems little argument against the efforts of the bodies and persons—*e.g.*, Department of Education and Science, Arts Council, Jennie Lee, Society of Authors—who regard additional payments as one such encouragement.

The schemes advanced hitherto for supplementary payments to authors have had as their basis a notion of Public Lending Right which implies that authors lose money because of the use of their books in public libraries. Neither the right nor the loss has been proved. Indeed, there are strong contrary arguments.

The right to additional hiring payment is not found in other trades. This case has been argued previously at length, with the result that The Libraries (Public Lending Right) Bill was rejected in 1960.

The usual mode of rewarding authors is for the publishers to pay a royalty of about 10 per cent of the retail selling price for each copy sold. When the sales prospects are good—say, when more

than 10,000 copies are likely to be sold—the rate of royalty may be raised, although the rate for paperbacks is usually much lower. Thus successful authors are paid better than 'beginners' not only for higher sales, but they generally enjoy a better rate of reward. This seems reasonable, but it raises the question as to whether it is desirable that the gap between the successful authors and the beginners should be increased further by levies based on public-library holdings or issues.

What would happen if the proposed rewards were to be on the basis of books stocked or lent from public libraries? The successful author would get more money and so apparently would the struggling beginner. But the sponsors of these schemes do not appear to have contemplated the source of the money: they presume it will come from local- or central-government funds, and have failed to recognize that only so much of the National Product will be allocated to public libraries, and there is little evidence that government, central and local, is likely to increase this proportion substantially. The sponsors have failed to realize that it is a reasonable presumption that the money they seek to raise would inevitably, directly or indirectly, come out of the book-purchase funds of the libraries, and the first authors to suffer would be those who had not established themselves. The result would be, as noted above, that the rich authors get richer and the poor ones get poorer.

Furthermore, new authors' work is in practice underwritten before publication by the public libraries: about half the first edition of a new author is bought by public libraries. There is a danger in the new proposals that financial considerations in the libraries might make it impossible for some new authors to be published at all. In this connection it was interesting to find the following quotation in the issue of *The Author* which launched the "Brophy Penny": "What of the author? The beginner's plight is bad. He has to appear in a small edition and it is the small editions that are uneconomic. Many of our Publishers, however, do take the risk, and . . . it is up to the reading public to be experimental, too, and not to rely on the established favourites."[1] Publishers take the risk, of course, and the public libraries underwrite some of that risk.

An aspect of book-promotion which authors should not overlook—many acknowledge it—is that public libraries provide a

[1] Brown, Ivor, in *The Observer* (March 11th, 1951).

better 'shop-window' than most booksellers and that public-library readers are among the most enthusiastic buyers of books.

Another point to be borne in mind is that it might cost more to raise the fund than would be collected. It would thus be a kindness to the authors (most of whom appear pathetically ignorant not only of general economics but also of the specific problems of the book trade and of libraries) to tell them that the share of the National Product they now receive is unlikely to be changed substantially by any administrative schemes or special legislation.

It was reassuring during discussion of these payments that Jennie Lee repeated her view that the book-funds of libraries would not be allowed to suffer as a result, and eventually it became clear that her aim was to finance the proposals from central-government resources. Nevertheless this raises another question: if there are funds available for such a scheme, could they not be better applied to more general advantage in grants to public libraries? Would such a scheme, for example, jeopardize any future grants for public-library purposes?

No commentary on this subject would be complete without reference to the Scandinavian schemes for subsidizing authors, since these schemes are so often advanced as reasonable parallels; but they are not.

Authoritative articles reporting the operation and experience of authors' funds in these countries and explaining the justification for them indeed emphasize that the factors regarded in Scandinavia as critically important do not apply at all in the United Kingdom. The most serious element demanding subsidy for authors in Scandinavia is described by H. J. de Vleeschauwer, whose consideration of this whole subject is almost definitive.[1] "The starting-point in these countries was the consideration that each had a very limited linguistic zone, with the result that the literary artist could not rely on a great enough turnover from his work to assure him of an adequate income."

A second factor applies in Scandinavia and not in the United Kingdom—namely, state aid to libraries, continuously in Norway since 1876, in Sweden since 1905, in Denmark since 1882.

It is significant to note also the changing aspect of what has been called the Lending Right in Scandinavia. Initially the designation

[1] Vleeschauwer, H. J. de, *The Lending Right*, in *Mousaion*, No. 75–76 (1964), pp. 4–67.

had some substance because originally the levy was based on this. The unnecessary and almost irrelevant association with public-library loans has been realized, and there is a move away from this idea.

In Sweden alone now is the authors' fund related to library loans, and even in that country the trend is clear. From the funds raised (equal to 5 per cent of the libraries' state subsidy) about half only are paid direct to the authors in respect of the loans of their books. The other half is paid out in grants to deserving authors.

In Denmark the authors' payments are related to the number of copies in libraries. When in recent years the matter has been discussed it has been considered that Denmark cannot support on a commercial basis more than one thousand authors; again the emphasis has been on a small country with a small reading public, a factor not applicable in the United Kingdom.

The Norwegian system is simple and gives help where it is needed. The government pays into a fund a sum equal to 5 per cent of the state library grant for the purchase of books. The fund thus does not involve the libraries. The disbursement of the fund is towards granting scholarships, helping young writers as they begin, supporting old writers and writers' widows.

What in Scandinavia may have been regarded as payment for a Lending Right in the past is rapidly becoming state aid to literature.

Vleeschauwer summarizes the Scandinavian experiments as "disguised systems of subsidising national literature—systems which began everywhere from the idea of a definite lending right, but which, without explicitly withdrawing the idea, under cover of it became something quite different. Even the second [the Swedish] system is only partly a lending right. Each system entails the idea of compensation for the author, but only to a very small extent the lending by the library as such. Where the effective circulation is taken into account at all the idea of a lateral application of copyright seldom plays an important part. On the contrary, it is usually divorced from it; but the fixing of the modality of payment to authors here and there falls back on the circulation coefficient."[1]

Thus if there is to be any subsidy at all to authors in the United

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 14–15.

Kingdom it seems reasonable, as Jennie Lee has suggested, that it should be provided from central government funds. Such a course will find much wider support than from any scheme based on library use or stocks: strength for this course may also be lent by the fact that not all authors are pressing for Public Lending Right because many of them realize that they will not necessarily benefit, and, indeed, some may have realized that there are hidden dangers in the library-based schemes. It is significant that Lending Right proposals have not had a wide support from authors of good general books nor from authors who are in the apprentice stage, trying to establish themselves. Support has come almost exclusively from authors of fiction who are well established.

It is perhaps surprising that some of the more vocal of these authors, particularly those who claim so much protection under copyright, have not chosen to test their rights by selling books only to private individuals or on the condition that they will not be used in public libraries. Admittedly this would be a retrograde step, for the libraries would lose some of their universal-provision quality and because the authors would lose in income.

It is imperative in the interests of free expression, culture, and literature that authorship should be encouraged, even although this means that much rubbish will continue to appear which would be best unpublished. If this is accepted a case can be made for grants to deserving authors; but immediately another problem arises: who are the deserving authors? Certainly it is unreasonable to include only authors represented in public libraries: the reward should be to all authors, editors, illustrators, and the like who contribute to the authorship of any book, although even this would raise its own problems in the definitions of what constitutes a book, and it may be that the authors in scientific, philosophic, religious, and economic fields contributing to school texts, reference books, and learned periodicals would feel justified in asking that their benefit to civilization be recognized as greater than that of, say, some novelists.

The duration of such subsidies to authors could be fairly linked with normal copyright arrangements so that any benefits from the scheme would continue into any non-productive part of the author's life. Nevertheless, a case can be made for the special grants now made by the Arts Council, for instance, and these might be extended to make special provision for authors in the

early, tentative stages of their writing career or for retired, invalid, or otherwise incapacitated authors at the other end of the scale.

While all this can be justified, there appears to be no merit in the argument that authors are suffering an unjust loss because their books are used extensively in public libraries and that accordingly they should be paid royalties additional to those received by them in respect of the sale of their books.

However, to investigate the argument further, Lord Eccles in April 1971 appointed a Working Party on Public Lending Right with the task of considering "how an amendment to the Copyright Act 1956 which added lending to the public to the acts restricted by copyright might be implemented". Included in the Working Party were representatives of the Department of Education and Science, Arts Council, Association of Municipal Corporations, Booksellers Association, British Copyright Council, County Councils Association, Library Association, Publishers Association, Society of Authors, and Department of Trade and Industry. The Working Party were asked to embody their conclusions in a "report to the Paymaster General, designed to provide a basis for a decision of policy on whether such an amendment to the Act would be a practical and worthwhile step".[1]

[1] House of Commons: Parliamentary Debates ('Hansard'), vol. 821 (1971), Written Answers, col. 271–272.

10 *The Library without Books?*

The essential function of a public library, which should take precedence over all ancillary services, said the Roberts Committee, "is to supply to any reader, or group of readers the books and related material for which they may ask". It should also be a centre for exhibitions, lectures, adult-education classes, and discussion groups.[1]

But are books necessarily the best media for the tasks set out for the public library? If education, information, recreation, and entertainment are its functions, would better tools for these purposes not be the audio-visual aids, computers, and television? After all, the services of the B.B.C. are almost universally available throughout the country, and the Royal Charter of the Corporation, to run from 1964 to 1976, contains this phrase singularly reminiscent of the public library's provision: "the great value of such [broadcasting] services as a means of disseminating information, education and entertainment". As suggested earlier, all the media, mass or individual, as well as books have a contribution to make, and it may be appropriate to consider which of the other devices can best serve the library's objectives.

A book is the printed record of thought and action conveyed through words; it is the documentary evidence of some thought in the mind of the author who has written this record with the intention of attempting to re-create in the reader's mind the same thought which prompted him to write. Literature is the accumulated representation of life made through the written and printed word. The cinema and television are representations of life through sight and sound; they are much closer to actuality than books, and accordingly have some advantages over the latter. However, in the consideration of the present point it is patent that

[1] Ministry of Education, *The Structure of the Public Library Service in England and Wales* (1959), pp. 8–9.

the nearer to reality they approach the less shall be the effort needed to interpret them, and the greater shall be the laziness cultivated in the mind of the recipient. There is little need to interpret the messages of the cinema and television at all: in contrast, the book requires interpretation and stimulates mental exertion. Nevertheless, there are many aspects of teaching which can be achieved most effectively by the devices used by cinema and television, sight and sound together, where the mind is left free of interpretation and ready to absorb the fact or mechanical message to be conveyed. Furthermore, in many countries the need to educate and convey information generally is well-nigh impossible through books and the printed word: there is so much illiteracy, and both as cause and a result there is so little printed material, that if public libraries are to have an immediate effect their media will not be books at all but the products of the electronic age. If the audio-visual devices are effective for illiterate societies, their superiority to books in that context must pose the question: in what circumstances in advanced societies should these devices be preferred to books?

An immediate case which springs to mind is the international road-traffic sign, a simple pictorial presentation of a symbol readily understood without any literacy or translation problem. Indeed, such graphic material is the simplest of the visual aids, pictures, paintings, prints, photographs, and other illustrations already familiar in British public-library collections. The impact of the road-traffic sign, or, indeed, any other pictographic, representation lies in the more or less immediate conveyance of a message.

The provision of education, information, recreation, and entertainment by a public library is basically a second-hand process: the experience of things, phenomena, and people can be conveyed through books, but it is a representation and not reality. In education especially, the nearer to actuality it is possible to get the better will be the results: to see, handle, or operate something personally is the ultimate in the learning experience.

The limitations of books are obvious even today: there are aspects of the visual which they can provide only to a limited degree, even in illustrations; it is difficult to indicate motion, for example, and the effectiveness of the visual representation of reality is tied to the quality of the reproduction.

Books are better in the field of literature than some other devices, but they lack any auditory quality of their own.

The effectiveness of the devices now being considered will be in direct proportion to their ability to stimulate the memory of some past experience or to establish as nearly as possible in the subject's mind a new fact or message based on the extent of his past experience. A hierarchy of communication effectiveness may be charted as follows, beginning, of course, with the personal experience itself and followed by the apparatus in descending order of its ability to reproduce this for the subject, the reader, listener, watcher, and so on.

Actuality and experience of it
Contrived reproduction of actuality
Demonstrations
Models
Television
Cinema
Radio and telephone
Sound records
Books
Pictures
Printed words (*e.g.*, information sheets)
Computers
Abstractions

At first glance and despite some telling advantages the book would appear singularly ill-suited for communication.

The printed word has its limitations in so far as the extent of the reader's vocabulary will set the boundaries beyond which he must find it difficult or impossible to understand the message. Furthermore, the text will only be capable of creating for the reader a picture which his past experience allows because the author will have written with the background of his *own* experience constantly governing his communication. Words, therefore, may play the author false if the data he offers the reader are not identified precisely by the reader. A single example will suffice. Many people, asked if they read *books*, reply in the affirmative, confidently and honestly in the knowledge that their weekly or monthly *magazine* is awaiting them at home.

The librarian is bound to ask if he can continue to depend as much on the printed word as he has in the past. He should be

looking at the other devices and materials nearer to actuality, which can better equip the library's users with the services they seek. Furthermore, although single sheets of information, pictures, posters, and the printed page of a book are quick providers of information allowing the reader to use this at his own speed of interpretation, when such papers are bound up as books they lose much of their immediate availability.

There is another reason why the librarian must think of new means of communication: the users of libraries are being deluged with books and information in printed form; it is no longer possible to absorb all the valid material offered. Modern research and invention inevitably generate more knowledge, but development of communication techniques has not kept pace with the generative process. Librarians must be ready to co-operate in the search for better means of conveying the educational, recreational, and other messages which hitherto have been reasonably provided in the past by books and similar graphic media.

Readers today are subject also to the mass media; they cannot fail to be influenced by the sophisticated near-reality of television, cinema, and radio. Nevertheless the book has a simplicity of format which commends it, and the printed book has proved itself over the last five hundred years. Some prophets in librarianship are foretelling the end of book-based libraries and their replacement by computer establishments. What they have failed to distinguish is the use of books for reading and books for snatches of information: they have ignored the great body of readers who are not concerned with the latter but are seeking to use the book in its convenient, portable form and with its extreme flexibility, to be used when it is required and used at whatever speed the reader chooses. Even in the field of information search much material is even now retrieved in a random search by scanning page after page of text rather than by scientific isolation by indexes or abstracts. Furthermore, in many fields of information, the book is an economical store method. The handbooks of societies, directories, and the like can provide information required by the searcher far more cheaply than if some central bank of the facts were available for consultation.

On the other hand if the librarian harnesses the modern communication devices effectively as well as continuing to use books extensively he will not only derive direct benefits from these

devices but will also reinforce the value and understanding of the printed book. At its most basic, this can be seen already when the by no means new device, the picture, is used to illustrate the text of a book: the picture can cut right across verbal problems and language barriers. In the same effective way as the international road signs have shown, experiments in America have demonstrated that illustrations alone can be used in instruction internationally; but the same experiments have also shown that the effectiveness of the illustrations can be doubled by the addition of a quite basic text, emphasizing further the lesson that different media should not be regarded as in competition but all as contributing their particular, valid features.

In examining the media and materials available the question will always be: what is the advantage of this medium over the others in conveying the message the user is seeking?

The advantages of books, mainly of text without illustration, have been mentioned in earlier chapters, but in any case reading has been so well defended in the past that it may sometimes prove difficult to persuade readers that the other methods of communication are as effective or better.

Illustrations, and this includes all kinds of flat pictures from the simple sketch to the magnificent colour photograph, are readily available in books, but their importance as individual items should not be overlooked. They are useful in exhibitions of all kinds from the purely informative to the highly decorative and aesthetic. They can be used to support many kinds of communication, for they are simple in their near approach to actuality. Their limitation is that they are 'frozen' in time, in contrast with, say, the cinema, which records movement in the past, or television, which may capture the events as they happen. This very disadvantage of the picture may be turned to good effect where 'stills' from moving films, for instance, may be used to show a single moment in time, such as an assassination or a runner breasting the tape at the end of a race.

Because the public library may be the single source of illustrations in some areas, it will probably find a ready demand from educational institutions for the use of the pictures for epidiascope—*i.e.*, the opaque picture projector—use.

The presentation of pictures to large groups of people is possible through the use of film strips and slides for projection. While

collections of slides may be made in libraries for special uses—*e.g.*, local history and topography—there are now many commercially produced sets of slides and film-strips that meet the needs of almost any student or tutor.

With its fundamental limitation that it is still, static, non-moving, the picture prompts thoughts of the cinema, the moving picture with or without sound accompaniment. The other drawback of the printed word and picture is the lack of sound, and consideration must be given to this important field of experience because it is through speech that most of normal communication is achieved between humans.

With the invention of the gramophone the recording of sound became possible; with the development of the electro-magnetic tape sound-recording became commonplace. Thus it is possible to have for reproduction whatever sounds are required in any educational, leisure, or other activity. The most common example of sound recording and the longest in use is the gramophone record; its value in teaching or entertainment is obvious. More recently the use of records and audio-tapes for language-teaching has focused more attention on the joint use of sound and printed word. Already backward readers are being stimulated by listening to readings while following the text in books before them, and serious cases of dyslexia (difficulty in reading) are being treated by the use of word cards which can be associated simultaneously with typewriters, photographs or diagrams, and sound records in order to help identification, spelling, and pronunciation.

Inevitably in the learning of foreign languages the use of sound recordings is becoming common practice: even where skilled speakers of the foreign languages are available audio equipment has been adapted to enable students to compare their own efforts at speaking the foreign language either with the teacher's or with some pre-recorded performance. Such equipment is the basis of the language laboratory now used in many schools and likely to be extended even more widely.

Concern that audio-teaching for children may slow the pace of reading and writing seems to have been exaggerated: on the contrary, in practice the audio-lingual techniques have shown promise of quicker and better learning of the spoken and written language. Audio-recording can be used to echo a student's own speech for comparison with other, more perfect recordings; it is

an invaluable support for printed material in any essentially auditory function, especially the oral use of the language.

Just as old newspapers, posters, and other contemporary papers have progressively become archive material, so too do the recordings of famous speeches contribute to the study of history, so that there is a clear place in the library for all types of audio-record, on disc, tape, card, and film. The audio-record is a medium for the sound memory as books can be a printed memory.

Communication often demands immediacy, and in the field of sound this connotes radio and telephone. The latter is so obvious a tool in libraries that no elaboration is needed. Any service which purports to maintain up-to-date services in information will generally find printed sources adequate under normal conditions, but in the many crises which afflict the world it is vital for librarians to be equipped to keep their services in touch with latest developments. In most developed countries the radio is pervasive to the point that librarians will probably not be called on to retail the most recent news from radio; they will no doubt have maintained their own up-to-dateness by personal listening.

Radio in libraries has another function, although this is now to some extent being surpassed by television—that is, as an educational instrument for groups pursuing a special course of study. Television is now superseding radio in this field because of the advantages for many subjects where visual considerations are important. An intermediate stage is radiovision, which consists of a radio programme supported by a prescribed visual presentation based on film-strip or slides appropriate to the topic. All such equipment and the space in libraries for its use are vital to such a project as the Open University.

The commonest audio-visual medium before television was the cinema, and it has been said of it that it offered an international language without the problems of words. Its value in libraries as a memory record and as an educational medium is immense. It is an attention-commanding medium like all photo-projected devices in that it is the sole light object in a semi-darkness. Thus it is valuable in communication with groups in a way that a set of the same book sometimes is not, no matter how serious the study group may be.

Since the criterion of the communication medium is to convey actuality and experience, the cinema rates high, for the pictures

are moving and have accompanying sound. Furthermore, the camera has a freedom greater than that of any single spectator and listener; it can be moved about the scene, it can focus on several aspects of it and can give an almost universal orientation of viewpoint. It can present scenes of great diversity in quick succession, in juxtaposition or superimposed to achieve a startling impact. As a recorder of history or of scientific experiment it is better than the notebook, for its mobility allows it to catch the whole scene. Furthermore, with editing it can speed up or slow down processes and time-spans to suit the purpose of the study. It can magnify any aspect too small for ordinary vision and adjust it accordingly.

In reading, the mind is transported from thought to thought, from place to place, depending on the flexibility and capacity of the reader's imagination. In the cinema his imagination is stimulated by a transportation visible to him.

The limitations of the cinema are similar to those of radio in some respects: the spectator or listener must be available when the programme is presented, and there is a momentariness about these media which demands an immediate acceptance and understanding. There is little chance to see a film or hear a radio programme several times and almost no opportunity at all to turn such a programme back to isolate any single element for further study. Thus there is a need with the 'immediate' media to convey the meaning quickly and unambiguously. Of course, this is also a strength of the cinema: its capacity to produce more immediate and striking effects than those in literature may create more permanent impressions. Whereas in reading a book the reader will have to translate the thoughts or images from the words before him, in cinematic presentation the image appears complete, with no need to build up the picture which is there already in its starkness. On the other hand the cinema film, unlike the novel, is denied the leisurely unfolding of a plot.

It is well established that the cinema holds the attention, helps the student to retain its message effectively, and stimulates an interest in reading. These are attributes well worth capitalizing, and the use of the sound motion-picture film in libraries is well justified on all these counts, not only in work with children but with adults too.

Because of the value of photographs, slides, and moving-picture

films in libraries, especially in the field of local activities, libraries should have appropriate cameras and other equipment; alternatively, they should maintain close contact with photographic and cinema societies to enable the pictorial records to be maintained adequately.

From still pictures to the cinema and on to television are easy steps. Television offers almost all that the cinema does, but it has, like sound radio, the advantage of catching events as they happen, of presenting history as it occurs.

Occasions in libraries which demand television presentation fall into two categories: the series of programmes whose content is deliberately educational and deliberately aimed at people who wish to follow the whole course; and there are the events unique enough to justify an extensive public availability. The latter will be unusual in highly developed countries well covered by individual ownership of sets, but there are countries where this state of affairs is not yet achieved and where group use of a television set would be justified. Such group viewing is valuable anywhere that educational societies are prepared to use programmes presented especially as part of an education course—*e.g.*, the Open University.

The momentary topicality of television has its disadvantages too, of course, and until recently this was an argument against the use of the normal television set for some educational purposes. When a programme is being watched the picture, with its sound accompaniment, has to be absorbed instantly, for it is there one moment and gone the next. There is no chance to recall it for further examination as one may do in the reading of a book, simply turning back a page or two to fit the story or topics together when a difficulty arises. With television one must wait for a second showing of the programme if it is ever repeated.

To overcome this shortcoming new devices have been made to allow the viewer to watch the programme of his choice when he wants to see it and with the facility to turn it back or forward as he pleases. Thus, as simply as the tape recorder can be used to record and replay sounds so now can video tape recorders do this for viewing and listening. The advantage to schools, colleges, and libraries is obvious.

Video-tape recording is now ready for general commercial circulation. In its most sophisticated form cassettes are available

for replay on an instrument which is plugged into the viewer's own television set. In another, less expensive, form the video recording is on discs similar to gramophone records. Thus the student or other viewer can choose his programme and see it when and as often as he wishes, and can 'freeze' or replay the action at will.

From such a device to actuality there is only one intervening medium of presentation for students—that of models, demonstrations, and contrived reproductions of experience. This leads to thoughts of museums and theatres, which quite reasonably should be, and sometimes are, associated with public libraries. It is a clear indication that the library must be a focal point in the community for education, culture, and communication as advocated in successive government reports and circulars.[1]

Thus the development of audio-visual aids, the appearance of new devices, and the improvement of those already in use demands from librarians the realization that books are not the only communication medium of importance in study for information, education, and recreation. The new media involve librarians in a reappraisal of how best any particular function of the library can be fulfilled, always remembering that books are convenient, permanent, and preservative to a degree as yet untried in the other media.

There was a time at the beginning of the public library's history when the quality of a library's books in number, variety, availability, and physical condition would have provided an excellent measure of that library. But that has changed and will change further and quickly. It may soon be that a library will not be measured by its books primarily but by the provision of other facilities in such media as the now commonplace micro-forms, cinema, television, as well as the newer forms of audio-visual instruments, video-tape recordings and the like, and in computer apparatus for the storage and retrieval of all kinds of information and perhaps even for entertainment. The effectiveness of a public library may depend then on the new devices as much as on the traditional printed word.

[1] *Cf.* Public Libraries Committee, *Report* (1927), pp. 37 and 74. Ministry of Education, *The Structure of the Public Library Service in England and Wales* (1959), pp. 8–9.

11 *The Library in Other Social Fields*

The advent of the county libraries marked the first expansive operations by public libraries outside their own premises. Not only did this result in an extension of their normal work, but encouraged them to widen its scope to embrace fields which hitherto had been covered inadequately or not at all. These included service to hospitals, prisons, and other units outside normal community life.

This chapter is concerned with the services to readers abnormal in that they cannot use the routine provisions of the public library. The result of some such work is truly social, since the advantage to the community is probably greater than the sum of the individual benefits.

Perhaps the commonest reason for the withdrawal of an individual from community life is sickness, and public libraries are justified in allocating some of their resources to the provision of a service to those in hospital or laid aside from some of their normal pursuits by being confined to their homes. The 'cure of books' is of little use to the patient who is suffering from an acute illness or disability in hospital, since these ailments are generally of short duration, and the patient, knowing this, is mainly concerned with affairs outside the hospital, or is in such a condition as to have little interest beyond his immediate discomfort. Despite this there is often time for reading, even with the short-term patient, and the benefits of such reading do not differ greatly from the benefits of similar reading under normal conditions.

The significance of reading by invalids is more marked among those confined to hospital for a long period. This applies equally to the ailing, disabled aged people tied to their homes, whether these are institutions or domestic houses. The extended enforced absence from the community creates the need for some substitute

for the elements of a full social life. The radio and television offer solace in many cases where the creative instincts are not highly developed, but where the patient has an alert mind some other outlet must be found for his capabilities. Naturally, the other invalids supply some of this need in institutions, but conversation and the other essentials of society can only be enjoyed fully when there is freedom to move and choose companions sharing one's own tastes and to continue to extend one's interests beyond the immediate environment. The range of pastimes suitable for the sick is limited, and generally it is desirable to avoid strenuous exertion in medical and surgical cases. Reading is therefore the obvious choice, and has been widely recommended by the medical profession.

Books do not occupy much space, nor do they need ancillary equipment (except where a patient is unable to turn the pages, and a device to do this is provided); they cover the whole range of experience, and may be found in various degrees of solemnity or levity. The invalid can absorb himself in a book and be transported, in imagination at least, from his restricted life back to normality, and all with little exertion or inconvenience. In convalescence from an illness or where an otherwise healthy person is immobilized boredom is a serious threat to recovery, since it either depresses or tempts over-exertion. Reading, even if only of the simplest and lightest literature, is a boon in such circumstances, the patient having a substitute for the mental or bodily activity he normally would have been enjoying.

Though reading can never really take the place of living experience, it does offer an alternative where full active participation is not possible. It can be compensation for some lost faculty, and this is reflected in the use of libraries by deaf people. Public libraries by their work for the sick contribute their part not only to the mental wellbeing of the community but also to its physical health.

In the same manner the libraries, by their service to the aged, in or out of institutions, bring comfort to people whose usefulness in professional, industrial, and commercial life is judged to be negligible. It is necessary for some social service to recognize that age alone is no yardstick of intellectual ability, and to provide for the old the means to utilize the talents still left to them. Lady John Manners, whose conception of libraries was based almost

exclusively on their contribution in social improvement, wrote in 1885 that she could not "help wishing that books might be provided in every workhouse".[1] The principle remains the same: books are an alternative, albeit an imperfect one, for full life when that is itself denied.

The blind, cut off from full participation in the community because of their misfortune, can find in the public libraries a liaison with the large organizations catering especially for their needs. These include the National Library for the Blind, with its great resources of Braille and Moon books, which are too costly for general sale, and the National Institute for the Blind, with its emphasis on rehabilitation leading to wider facilities, such as 'talking books', long-playing disc or tape recordings of great books, as well as a programme of publishing the more familiar embossed types.

A marked feature of book provision for the blind is the part played by the welfare services, which quite often do all the organization for blind readers without reference at all to the public libraries. Obviously the readers cannot afford to buy the books, which cost so much more to produce than ordinary books, and have had to rely on some lending agency. The public library might reasonably be expected to do something for the blind, and this assistance would lie in providing a link with the great lending libraries for the blind, rather than in attempting to build up some local collections. In a few cases, in the larger towns, such collections were established and are maintained; in a few others the libraries act as liaisons with the national schemes; but these cases are exceptions. Accordingly, when these national institutions became partly a charge on the public funds of local authorities it was the welfare sections which acted as the intermediaries between the reader and books. This was largely a legacy from the considerable voluntary efforts of local committees. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the public libraries have hitherto played so inconspicuous a part in such an essential service.

In recent years, however, the public libraries have had an opportunity of helping the near-blind with a service of books printed in type large enough to overcome their particular disability. Hitherto, people with failing eyesight were helped only by the

[1] Manners, Lady John, *Some of the Advantages of Easily Accessible Reading and Recreation Rooms and Free Libraries* (1885), p. 50.

limited and sporadic efforts of individual librarians who produced book-lists drawing attention to particular volumes in larger-than-usual type. A specifically aimed provision is found now, however, in the Ulverscroft series of large-print books, produced since 1964 by F. A. Thorpe, Ltd, of Leicester. These are printed in 14 to 18 point, which is very much larger than normal book print. Originally they were issued in a large quarto size rather like children's annuals but printed on a special paper of less than half the weight and bulk yet maintaining a very high degree of opacity. They now appear in an attractive octavo format. The Ulverscroft books are supplied on a restrictive basis, normally only to libraries and other institutions for use by the partially sighted.

All good public libraries are making the Ulverscroft series available, and some have collections also of similar books originally produced in the United States to encourage the reading habit among young people between the ages of fourteen and thirty reluctant or hostile to reading. The latter series was largely stimulated by the Ulverscroft project.[1]

Several dozen British public libraries are now providing services for another section of society no longer enjoying full community life—namely, the inmates of prisons and Borstals. It is generally accepted that, while some of the enforced discipline is penal, a large part of the work in prisons and other similar establishments should be reformatory. As noted in a previous chapter, delinquents are seldom readers, and there may be some significance in this fact. In any case, the provision of library facilities in prisons offers the prisoner a means of escaping (to a limited extent, admittedly!) from his confinement and a means towards his mental improvement. A prisoner who is without such a mode of passing his time is much more susceptible to the corruption of the incurable criminal; by withdrawing into the world of the book he can conquer boredom, and the temptation to join with incautious and imprudent comrades in schemes of indiscipline is lessened. Though in the past small collections of books were to be found in most prisons, these consisted mainly of stock withdrawn from the public libraries or gifts from well-meaning citizens; in the former case

[1] A useful outline of library service to handicapped readers was given in Miss Joy Lewis's article in *Library Association Record* (May 1968), pp. 120–123. The Ministry of Health and Social Security memorandum H. M. (70) 23, *Library Service in Hospitals*, is also useful.

the books were probably too shabby to offer any incentive to read, and in the latter too often they were moralist and didactic, in a style and attitude not always calculated to attract the person being punished for some offence. It is only in recent years, with the increased collaboration of the public libraries supported by Prison Department of the Home Office, that the prisoners have had access to a properly organized library service.

As in the case of other people who are forced to lead their lives away from their families and friends, prisoners strive for normality: they seek substitutes for the orthodox way of life which they cannot follow. No matter how much people may protest their individuality, it is a human characteristic, equally strong, to struggle after conformity with others. But all people do not conform, and those who do not usually suffer for their oddness; among such are the convicts. The realization that they have become *different* has a bad moral effect, and any antidote is welcomed. Among the books of special value in such cases are those which prove to the prisoner that others have suffered similarly, have triumphed over their adversity, and returned to normal life. Because of the prisoner's tendency to become introverted, the most useful contribution books can offer him is to emphasize in some way the social life involving participation by all. The latter is not possible in prison, of course, but from up-to-date and often exchanged public-library loan collections the prisoner can take part vicariously at least in the activities of the free world. This aspect brings attention to the importance of a wide range of books rather than the limited selection of didactic and moralist works mentioned earlier. These, indeed, by their ethical attitude are perhaps the least suitable literature for prisons, since they merely force the prisoner into further contemplation of his isolation and the reasons for it, and aggravate his condition instead of alleviating it.

The need for occupying the mind is primary, for unless a convict is forced to maintain an active study of some topic he usually tends to allow his intelligent interests to flag and his powers of concentration to be dissipated. In order to ensure that he is not less valuable to the community on his return to normal life it is vital to offer some training, and, as was the case with the unemployed, here is an excellent opportunity of turning misfortune to good use. Time, which is perforce available, can be used for

educational benefit, and there is no need to stress again the value of the library in this field. The official reports on prisons have already recognized that the public library is the most obvious source of a good book-supply for the prison library.

The public library is still fulfilling some of the objectives set it in the nineteenth-century's work against crime; it *may* help to prevent crime, although there is no concrete evidence one way or the other; it is at least an alternative to the public-house and the street-corner. Industrial life and urbanization go hand in hand, and are still drawing young people from the country into unfamiliar circumstances away from parental and other domestic control.

The choice of entertainments open to young people in towns is wide, but few can be so readily available and hold so much potential profit as the use of the local public library. At its worst it can do less harm than many of the other pastimes. Ditzion emphasized the preservation of decent behaviour by the provision of wholesome entertainment, and stressed that public-library promoters do more for social crusades than those who deliberately, through religious and other moral campaigns, preach against the imperfections of society.[1]

In times where there is considerable movement of population within the same country the familiarity of the public library may provide a friendly atmosphere for young people in a strange town. With all the aspects of its service readily recognizable, the library may prove a haven in changed personal circumstances.

At the same time an improved library service in rural areas may serve to restrain a wholesale depopulation of these districts where that is undesirable. Improvement, in this case, may mean merely an increased supply of recreational literature. It was recognized by the 1927 Public Libraries Committee that such books are almost as necessary in the country as books of educational value.

The Working Party on Standards did not commit themselves so fully in this type of reading, suggesting that improvement in adult fiction, for example, should be in "the quality of the books and in adequate duplication rather than in the range of titles covered".[2]

[1] Ditzion, Sydney, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* (1947), pp. 97, 99, and 104.

[2] Ministry of Education, *Standards of Public Library Service in England and Wales* (1962), para. 44.

Nevertheless, by creating a contented populace in areas where few attractions exist, the libraries are rendering social, and often economic, service to society. Recreational reading thus assumes important proportions when so many people are leaving the country for the city with its more varied entertainments. This function has to be related to all intellectual levels, and the interpretation of "the quality of the books" must be in line with the duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children.

Experience elsewhere suggests that, as in Britain, casual recreation in conditions of comparative social isolation is a genuine part of a public-library service, and in Czechoslovakia, for example, surveys have shown that attendance at libraries in country districts is often the expression simply of a desire to meet other people interested in reading.

A student of social conditions among the peasantry of Kent in the mid-nineteenth century, F. Liardet, was quoted by Hole as reporting that the people occupied their leisure time "about home, doing sometimes one thing, sometimes another; but most times, going early to bed for want of something to do".[1] Inquiries in Scotland have shown that the greatest contributory causes of depopulation of rural districts are still loneliness and lack of social facilities.[2]

Even more extreme in their lack of facilities than the rural areas are the isolated communities on islands, lighthouses, and lonely military outposts. The value of public-library provision lies not only in the alleviation of boredom and discontent among such groups, but also in its service to the authorities responsible for each case. Recruitment to duties under such conditions is rendered a little easier because of the improvement in the amenities; better types of workers may be encouraged to volunteer for the work; there is not the same fear of frustration by loneliness or lack of interests, since books can cover the widest possible tastes. All these factors lead to a more contented and stable condition in the community.

Just as country folk who have moved to the town may find

[1] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 54.

[2] Manson, T. B., in *Scotland's Changing Population* (1948), p. 19.

pleasure in the readily recognizable services of the library, so also foreigners, refugees, and 'displaced persons' have been grateful to libraries for their presentation of the familiar things of life, reminders of scenes of old acquaintance, in their own language. At the same time the influence of libraries in habilitating new citizens from foreign countries is very great and a valuable contribution to their naturalization and absorption into their new modes of life.[1]

This is true of public-library efforts for the immigrant population in Britain and in the work in the United States towards integration of all their peoples. The common service to all gives promise as a social leveller and healer.

Even with the best of intentions, however, there must be care that the literature of the minority is not the only facility used by such readers, for this will only perpetuate separation. At the same time the public library must supply the original literature of immigrants; otherwise they will not use the library but will seek their native reading from any available source, thus continuing and probably deepening the isolation rather than healing the division between them and the society of their adopted country.

Loneliest of all, and perhaps most in need of some flexible and varied recreation, are the seafarers, who now may enjoy the book-lending services of the British Sailors' Society and the Seafarers' Education Service, which have branches associated with the public libraries of the chief ports in the United Kingdom. (Like the National Central Library, the Seafarers' Education Service owes its establishment to the inspiration and efforts of Albert Mansbridge.)

Mention may now be made of the less direct contributions of libraries. As organized, large-scale, informed buyers of books public libraries are a good influence on their construction and production. By their avoidance of the shoddy and their support for the good products libraries encourage publications of quality, and they are among the few buyers today who can afford to support significant works which, by their size or small circulation potential, may be offered only at high prices. Some simple but important details of imprint style and bibliographical matter are becoming more general now, mainly because of the efforts of librarians; these include the dating of the publication and accurate indication

[1] Bostwick, A. E., *The American Public Library* (1923), p. 58.

of the edition or printing. Some publishers have even arranged their catalogues by the Dewey classification system which not only gives the librarian a quick indication of their contents, but may also assist students, who are provided with a ready clue to where in libraries they may expect to find books on the same and related topics.

It was suggested by Jast in his *The Library and the Community* that one effect of book-lending by libraries would be to create a community of watchful guardians of public property,[1] but this does not seem so applicable today, when so much—*e.g.*, council houses, public gardens—is entrusted to the individual by the public authority and when there is more vandalism than ever before.

In any case, without such tenuous arguments it may safely be asserted of the library that it is capable of all the moral, educative, recreational, entertaining, and other beneficial objectives claimed for it during its first century.

[1] Jast, L. S., *op. cit.* (1939), p. 62.

12 *The Significance and Limitations of the Public Library*

To estimate the significance of the public-library movement in the face of the present social conditions it is necessary to see what libraries are doing to obtain for society the accepted standards of morality and physical wellbeing, to improve the intellectual condition of the community where that is possible. It is necessary to consider how the libraries' purposes must be adjusted, and what new aims created, if need be, to meet the changing circumstances.

It must be reiterated that the library as a social institution is concerned with people, primarily with people, and secondarily with books, for the people are the target at which the service is aimed and for which it exists. Thus, whatever the library does or fails to do must be measured against the needs of the community. To take an extreme case, a librarian might provide the finest collection of English literature in the world for his community, but he would fail in his duty if all the members of that community understood only some obscure Oriental language. The emphasis must be on the library's readers, actual and potential.

To justify itself the public library must demonstrate that it is worth the money spent on it, for every penny of its expenditure must be earned by some member of the community. Thus he is entitled to ask with all the others who contributed: Was the library service worth what it cost? Equally, could any other organization have provided the same facilities at the same cost or less? The library must prove its need: otherwise it must be written off as economically unsound. The relative need for it and other social services shall determine its priority in the financial schemes of the governing authority.

Bearing in mind that it is public money which provides the public libraries, the question is not only how a comprehensive and

efficient supply of books and information can be supplied but also what are the priorities in the purpose of the supply. Is the library service providing for the national good; should its facilities be in the fields where people are doing studies for their own good when their benefit also contributes to the national welfare? It is not too difficult to justify welfare and educational aspects of reading for entertainment such as the services of public libraries to the handicapped, to hospitals, or to schools, but will libraries still be serving the community if they allow people to indulge their own fancies freely at public expense?

With stern economic circumstances so often blighting progress there is a need to sharpen the focus on the priorities of each library function, not the priorities as each local councillor or librarian sees them but in the interest of the whole community.

Although the Dainton Committee's *Report* was on national-library provision its conclusions offer some indication of what may lie in the future for public libraries in their efforts to be comprehensive in their provision. They pointed out the increasing difficulties of keeping pace with the output of literature, and the "selection of acquisitions, arrangements between co-operating libraries and bibliographic processing all become progressively larger and more complex tasks. It is certain that even to maintain the present level of partial coverage will become rapidly more costly as time progresses. It is also inevitable that the nation's library services will continue to have to compete with other national priorities for the substantial resources which they will require.

"In some subject fields—particularly science, technology, economics and management studies—library and other information services will be so important to industry and commerce, and hence to the prosperity of the country, that the most comprehensive services will be widely regarded as necessary. But in some other disciplines, because a relatively low level of demand is associated with a vast quantity of potentially relevant material and also because it may not be possible to give as high a priority to services which are less directly related to the nation's economic wellbeing, it will probably continue to be impracticable to provide comprehensive coverage or so elaborate a range of information services."[1]

It would strengthen public libraries immeasurably if their

[1] National Libraries Committee, *Report* (1969), para. 228–229.

priorities were recognized as lying in educational and economic functions, leaving much of the task of entertainment to commercial organizations. These suggestions imply a change of emphasis rather than a run-down on the one hand or expensive new development on the other: reduction of the entertainment part of the service would help towards better information and educational facilities.

Doubts may linger in some authority minds whether their library service is capable of this important change from amenity service to education and information provision, and with great justification, because so many libraries have been so long starved of funds that their masters have never seen a good library in action. There is the continuing unhappy fact that ignorance of the potential of the public library remains in the highest places. Progressive authorities have seen the need for extending readers' resources, and this country needs a co-ordinated system of strong, efficient units capable of some economic return to the community through their educational, commercial, and technical provision.

There may be protests that the resident who conscientiously pays his rates towards the library deserves the kind of service he wants (say, of cowboy or crime stories at the rate of three or four per week), but this is an indulgence possible only in times of affluence. A satisfactory answer to the wish of many people to continue their enjoyable pastime of reading for pleasure could be found possibly in the establishment, in parallel with the free services of the community-benefit type, of a subscription library for entertainment. There are already similar dual local-government provisions, free public parks contributing to the health of townspeople who nevertheless have to pay if they wish to play at bowls, putting, or tennis. If a subscription-library service were to be inaugurated, however, many safeguards would have to be provided for the maintenance of the social welfare and educational functions, for, as has been noted earlier, the distinctions are difficult to draw between reading for profit and reading as a pastime. Indeed, a close examination of any proposal for such a subscription service might result in a continuation of the existing arrangements, with a tacit recognition that although entertainment is still a function of the public library it must not be given priority at the expense of the educational provision.

Under economic stress when comprehensive service is

impossible, the public-library authority will be forced into an assessment of reading activities, to seek out for priority those activities which, although they are directed mainly towards individual self-fulfilment, are also likely to make a contribution to the common good, such studies as technical reading for the improvement of one's own education, which in turn serves the community; even a study of the arts or physical recreation should help society generally. All of these activities fall into the social and utilitarian categories of behaviour. Nevertheless there is also the reading which may be social in attitude but with little communal benefit to offer, the sheer pastime of leisure, personally refreshing and pleasant but no more than that.

As public servants, librarians should be serving the *needs* of the community. More than a century has passed since the earliest public libraries were established, but the service in some smaller libraries has become the victim of its own foolish efforts to satisfy the self-indulgent *wants* of the general public.

Librarians should make a more concentrated effort to serve the educational and informational needs of the community, and although leisure reading may have its uses the question will remain: Can the authorities afford the cost of providing free entertainment from public funds?

But even after full consideration of the priorities for each part of the service there are difficulties in library budgeting. Too often the council or committee assesses the estimates for the library on the apparent needs, based on existing demand rather than on a studied survey of the potential value of the service if finances were made readily available. This value cannot be judged alone from the satisfaction of individuals who may be inspired by a surfeit of material which, while pleasing them, does not communicate any lasting good to the community at large. The lowest useful assessment of social value must take into account the result for the community; it must be the sum of the benefits to each individual, and any resultant integrated advantage. Only some of the population, about a quarter of the total, use public libraries, so that consideration of their views alone cannot evaluate the service it provides. That service must be necessary to all the community, even if all do not use it actively as readers.

There must be flexibility of purpose, so that any emphasis may be adjusted to suit the tendencies of a particular community or

age. At the same time, whatever adjustments are made to suit peculiar conditions, the aims of the community towards general improvement must not be sacrificed. The principles must be staunchly held, but the methods of advancing them must be pliable enough to allow a harmonious and profitable partnership of tendency and objective.

As asserted earlier, the progress of organized education has not yet brought to it the freedom from direction which many liberal thinkers of the nineteenth century advocated. The library's importance in the free interchange of progressive ideas is thus emphasized. It symbolizes the toleration of unorthodox views in face of the education establishment, which has reasonably been called "an agency for the indoctrination of the beliefs and practices of society, that is, its most powerful pressure groups".[1]

By their now highly developed organization British libraries are in an unequalled position to exploit the country's book resources. When the library services in some towns were curtailed during the War of 1939–45 the necessity for them was demonstrated more forcibly than in normal times. Today the public libraries and their associated exchange systems are so much a part of the educational and cultural structure of society that it is difficult to conceive how a community accustomed to their service could carry on its work without them.

However, there are still doubts, and Dewey's words of almost a century ago, are still apt. "The value of libraries attached to colleges, to historical and scientific societies, and to other learned bodies has been long acknowledged . . . but it is not so with the libraries for the unlearned. Their value is not universally granted and the libraries themselves are not yet in existence in all the places they are needed."[2]

By the efforts of librarians to cover all the country with service points and to enlist the fullest resources through co-operation, their value is being manifested more widely. Only in co-operation did the libraries take the positive step towards success. Without such collective working the system returns to the fragmentation which spelt the destruction of the individual libraries founded by

[1] Rumney, Jay, and Maier, Joseph, *The Science of Society* (1953), p. 160.

[2] Dewey, Melvil, quoted in *Library Association Record* (September 1936), p. 472.

private benevolence and which led to the decay even of the mechanics' institutes. In his survey of the mechanics' institutes Hole referred to the limitations of purely local efforts. "Much has been done by individuals and voluntary associations, but done without system and without relation to actual wants, so that a large amount of effort has been unproductive."[1] He also quoted from the *North British Review*, which supported the need for a co-ordinated system of lending libraries. "An isolated lending library in a country village is a very good thing; but it requires the support of other lending libraries in the neighbourhood to render it permanently efficacious. On its first establishment, there is sure to be a heavy run upon it. The novelty of having books at command is something exhilarating and exciting; and the villagers, especially the boys and girls, and the old people who are past work, are continually coming to exchange them. But, after a while, the demand begins to languish. The readers have 'had the pick' of the library, and they either have, or they think they have, had all the books that they care to read. If, then, the proprietor of the library can, at this point, exchange it for another established in a neighbouring village, he can revive the declining appetite by offering his neighbours a feast of new intellectual food."[2]

In modern conditions the demands made on public libraries are far greater, and the libraries must have their resources available for rapid supply to any point in their service area. Even now the co-operative arrangements are creaking: they are too inefficient to be regarded as a substitute for integrated stocks of large libraries which should now be the pattern in Britain. Co-ordination must soon supersede co-operation if progress is to be made, if the modern public library's services are to be finally elevated beyond the sum of the previous parochial facilities.

Nevertheless public-library co-operation for thirty years has made a considerable contribution to the universal availability of books to British readers: it was the first step in the right direction.

Whatever success they may have achieved in their organization, the public libraries have had very little credit accorded them for it and for their benefits to the community. Social surveys, national and local, have mentioned the existence of the libraries, but their

[1] Hole, James, *An Essay on Literary, Scientific, and Mechanics' Institutions* (1853), p. 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

significance is neglected. For example, in the Redcliffe-Maud Royal Commission Report on local-government reorganization in England and Wales public libraries were given scant treatment, and the White Papers from successive Governments in 1970 and 1971 gave no sense of appreciation of their importance and no promise of a uniformly strong library service. In the Wheatley Report, the corresponding document for Scotland, public libraries were described as an amenity service, again very briefly, again repeating the misconception which denies their real purpose.

Can it be that the profession exaggerates its own accomplishments? It was chastening to find that the Library Association admitted in 1943 the existence of a library service which, instead of anticipating demand, still was trying to catch up with it.[1] And a quarter of a century later the public libraries are still so financially restrained that they have little opportunity for initiative while they are under constant pressure from that part of the public which recognizes the value of the service.

Early references to the libraries in contemporary literature were usually confined to an exposition of their possibilities or to facetious commentaries on their failings. Examples of the former have already been quoted, and a sample of the latter, scornful and uninformed, now follows. On the subject of a legacy diverted to library uses from its original purpose of supplying flannel petticoats for the poor, "Looker-on", in *Blackwood's Magazine*, wrote: "Now, it will not be supposed that the Looker-on is indifferent to books. He is free to confess that he would not care . . . a twopenny d— for his life without them. (He would add, however, were it not a pretence and inference that he has a sumptuous library of his own, which is not the case, that he would almost rather do without these cherished companions than study them in a free or any other public library; but this by the way.) . . . And to think we have done away with that [the provision of the petticoats] in order that a number of louts may have a nice warm room to read the worst novels and the sporting news in the papers and neglect their natural work!"[2]

Even as the library established itself more securely in this

[1] Library Association, *The Public Library Service: its Post-war Reorganization and Development* (1943), p. 4.

[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. clvii (1895), pp. 153–154.

country there was not the extensive reference to it in literature which was experienced in America. In Britain when writers did mention the library there always seemed to be some unhappy inaccuracy to mar the value of the reference. A classic example of this was in Josephine Bell's *Death on the Borough Council,* which presented a very grim picture of library service. Alan Glencross has cited many other similarly uninformed novels, and summarized the position thus: "The public library as a source of information is something almost unknown in fiction. Authors tend to send their characters to the London Library for books, to the British Museum for information. When these resources fail—they ring up an expert. There are few exceptions to this generalization even among the hundreds of fictional detectives."[1]

Lionel McColvin may have had such characters in mind when he listed among the most important opponents of the public-library service, people who, knowing the value of books and using them, get them from some other source, and thus see no need for anyone to use the public libraries.[2]

Of recent years the position has improved, and now there is a more enlightened picture of the public library, although this has by no means demolished the caricature completely.

Much more serious is the neglect of libraries by the non-fiction writers. The remarkable aspect of this feature is that out-of-the-way and often expensive sources of books may be recommended while the public libraries are left unmentioned.

Even at the launching of the Open University the contribution of the public library was recognized almost as an afterthought, and only then was there a serious effort to exploit the great potential of its nation-wide services.

When there is a temptation to self-satisfaction in the accomplishment of the libraries (and on the strength of the services listed in Chapter 6 there is sometimes an excuse for self-satisfaction), it is well to remember and re-emphasize the fact that only a small percentage of the whole population use them, and that the services to that restricted section of the community suffer from very serious limitations.

As noted earlier, the major compromise in public-library service arises when the needs of the community are related to the finances

[1] *The Assistant Librarian*, vol. xlvi (1953), p. 120.

[2] In *The Adelphi*, vol. xxix (1953), pp. 235–245.

available for putting the service into action. Some of the system's most regrettable defects spring from this compromise. Because they have used the libraries and have come to know some of their value the existing readers make their requests and needs known to the authorities. In consequence the service to them improves, but concessions to their taste may be paid for at the expense of the programme for general development. This development is usually in the direction of providing a library in keeping with democratic principles, towards offering a fair degree of service equally throughout the community. It is generally an effort to encourage non-readers into a use of its facilities and to extend its stock to cover all the needs, actual and potential, of a fully literate society. In the restraint on such progress the 'fair-share' principle breaks down. The library is thus failing to advance the cause of man's equality of intellectual opportunity by not spending its resources on the non-user too: it should work for the benefit of all in the community, and not take the popular and easy course of pandering to the demands of existing readers, while neglecting those still ignorant of its values, and thus exaggerating still further the inequalities.

The librarian is therefore called upon to know more than current reading tastes and trends. He must realize *why* people read what they do, and he must be aware of the causes in his own locality of why people are not reading books. And many who do not read books could, with very little persuasion, be shown their value. There is, for instance, the great mass of magazine readers who are ready to follow serialized versions of current best-sellers, and who seek guidance on all manner of subjects from periodicals, but who do not think of turning to books and libraries because their advantages have not yet been effectively conveyed to them.

The librarian must have too a social conscience in order to guide his work. He must attempt to ensure for each individual in society the best effect—best, that is, according to accepted morality or according to his own principles where lines of thought have not yet become clearly conventionalized. In this, of course, he is not alone, since all men of liberal thought are attempting to do the same thing through their own special devices, all anxious to increase the body of knowledge and in turn to advance human conditions. Thus he can derive benefits from associating his work with that of others going in the same direction, and can make his own peculiar contribution to the progress.

Because of the financial restrictions under which librarians labour they cannot yet undertake extensive missionary campaigns to carry knowledge of the library's facilities out to those adults still ignorant of them. In consequence the alternative course of concentrating on service to children has been chosen by most authorities as a long-term policy which ensures that the adults of the next generation are acquainted at least with what the library can offer them.

But again, full success has not attended these efforts, because although the children appear to find some interest in reading while still young, this seems in the majority of cases to evaporate with adolescence. In these instances by the time the young people reach their twenties the reading of books, either for entertainment or any other purpose, does not appeal to them, and the idea of using public libraries never crosses their minds. Here, surely, is a critical failure, a "wastage that is serious both in amount and in kind".[1] Having failed to infect adults with enthusiasm for a full use of their services, librarians are still not winning even a majority of the children leaving school to ideas of the benefits to be found in books and libraries. To those who know these benefits this is surprising, but the explanation is really not far to seek: the thrill of reading has not been instilled in the children; for some reason they do not feel an irresistible urge to study books.

Much of the blame must lie with the librarians who see the junior library service as having the single aim of raising literary standards, the librarians to whom the name of Enid Blyton has become anathema. They have failed to realize that, important as literary standards are, the primary aim should be to encourage the child's interest in books, to provide the stepping-stone to the use of libraries in adult life. The interest which so many children have found in light reading of the Enid Blyton type has often been just that stepping-stone, and few of these readers have shown the serious psychological disorders which one might have feared from the prohibitions and warnings of some well-intentioned but misguided librarians. On the contrary, books have become something to be enjoyed and treasured later in life. The rarefied atmosphere of some children's library stocks on the other hand has ensured a turning away from reading by prospective library-users

[1] Scottish Education Department: Advisory Council on Education, *Report on Libraries, Museums, and Art Galleries* (1951), para. 135.

who could find nothing at their level of interest and intellect and have concluded that the public library was not for them.

The public libraries are limited in influence because of the small proportion of the population using them, and because of the failure of children and older students to continue their reading habits as adults, whatever may be all the reasons for this. Even where their courses of study have been carried on to the college and university standard, students appear to be quite ready to abandon books at the earliest opportunity, despite what should by then be their obvious worth. Dr Urquhart, Librarian of the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, concluded from one of his early investigations of a section of industry that the use of public libraries by technicians is seldom contemplated, and cannot be claimed as a generally established habit. He reported that when asked where they would seek an American book or periodical only 6 per cent of managers, 11 per cent of technicians, and 8 per cent of foremen thought of the public library. Speaking of "almost any public library" outside the large cities, he said: "You will find that the library possesses only a small collection of technical books and an even smaller collection of technical periodicals. . . . You will find also that, as a rule, there is no special encouragement to the would-be reader to ask the library to obtain any literature he cannot find on the shelves. In consequence, the average citizen does not consider the local public library as an office of a national system for providing literature." Dr Urquhart was also critical of the public libraries' tendency to pay insufficient attention to the importance of the time factor in the supply of technical literature.[1]

This example can be repeated unhappily in fields other than the industrial, and offers a serious challenge to the public-library service if it claims to influence the whole community.

Librarians know that the public library is a source of information on all topics and that even the smallest service points with all their limitations are at least access points to the fullest materials not only of the local library system but of all the co-operative library resources of the country, but many members of the public, well-informed otherwise though they may be, do not appreciate this.

To some extent the legislative basis of the public library has been responsible for the limitation on the service's impact.

[1] Urquhart, D. J., *Public Libraries and Industry* (1953), pp. 2–3.

Whereas the health, education, and welfare systems have been obligatory duties laid on local councils by statute, the library provision until comparatively recently, 1965, has been optional, leaving the local authority to decide whether to provide the service or not and to what degree it was to be developed. Any opportunity to show local confidence in library service has only too often been negated by the pressure of maintaining the compulsory services, and the central government did nothing to help.

Even now, when the Department of Education and Science is charged with the duty of supervising the administration at least of the public libraries of England and Wales, there is little sign of any drive to persuade all the backward authorities to take the service seriously. The Department has had to discharge its duty since 1965 in an almost continuous period of financial restraint, which must have inhibited any constructive policies inaugurated or contemplated in the Department.

Many of the remedies proposed for the library's troubles involve political issues—*e.g.*, local-government boundary revision, government grants, revised legislation—so that the librarian is prevented from the fullest participation in pressing these solutions. His contribution must lie, therefore, mainly in the maintenance and increase in the prestige of his own library's service. This demands a very wide range of ability in addition to the specialized knowledge of library techniques. One faculty the librarian must have is the ability to appraise the quality and suitability of candidates presenting themselves as applicants for membership of his staff. Too long the library has suffered from the burden of staff whose academic qualification has overshadowed their blatant ineptitude in handling people. The use of personality tests when selecting staff may be some part of the solution to this problem. Another factor to help in this is co-operation between schools of librarianship and the employing libraries in the selection of candidates for courses of study in the schools. As long as students are encouraged to follow such courses without any guarantee that they can fit satisfactorily into some library posts, so long may there continue to be the misfits who form the caricatures of librarianship.

The public library has not the significance in the community which its potential service, and even its present resources, merit. Whether it will ever take a proper place in national life is largely the responsibility of the librarians and local authorities, who must

never neglect any opportunity of self-criticism, of ridding the libraries of any negations of public service and replacing them with vigorous counteraction. The profession in Britain is healthy enough in its criticism of obvious difficulties, though there has been no wide attack on problems involving fundamentals, aims, and the means of attaining them.

Social significance implies effect on human relationships. Librarians might perhaps have derived more support for their schemes if this had been emphasized effectively. Professional technique has tended to obscure the importance of people, and has come to be admired as an end instead of a mere tool to secure the human objectives.

Some of this attitude is attributable to full-time education in librarianship, which has the built-in danger that completion of a course and possession of a certificate appear to be proof of qualification as a fully fledged librarian. Another difficulty is that, since technical proficiency is easier to achieve than maturity of judgment in personal matters, many young librarians seek posts on 'back-room' duties, devoting themselves more to the machinery of librarianship rather than to professional fulfilment in public service.

Still too few librarians appear to regard their work as a duty which is capable of study as a genuine social science. This may be due to the unfailing emphasis in library training on technique to the neglect of the social aspects. Because of the prepossession of senior librarians with technical details, can it be that it has not yet occurred to the Library Association and others responsible for education in librarianship that there is such an aspect, and that this is the keystone on which every argument for public support depends? Until a student librarian knows what he is setting out to do, knows precisely what effect he hopes to make on the community, he is not ready to discuss the mechanics of the organization which he is to use in his efforts.

"The task of the reformer in libraries as elsewhere is never easy. He has to contend with people who have different visions and with others who have no vision at all. He has to contend with the suspicion and possibly with the opposition of those who have already achieved something in the field and are very well content with the result of their labours. He has to try somehow to give his ideals practical shape, and fit them into the social structure. He

is almost certain to cause resentment by interfering with vested interests."[1]

The reformer must always be prepared for criticism by his elders. The need for research into professional aims is apparent to all who see that clarification of purpose must precede the detailed organization of any effective institution. It is significant that research in librarianship has been left to individual effort, generally among younger members of the profession, often students at schools of librarianship. This means that often experiments are carried out without proper controls and without knowledge of whether local conditions or chance are involved in the success or failure of the scheme. The successes probably stand a chance of receiving notice and wider adoption. The failures, on the other hand, are likely to be unpublished, and may be doomed to quite unjustified obscurity. Although there seems to be an interest in libraries by OSTI, now a part of the Department of Education and Science, the projects sponsored by them are seldom based on public libraries. Thus the research on public libraries in Britain appears to compare unfavourably with that undertaken in some countries with library services which do not compare in quality with British standards.

Notwithstanding lack of support or co-operation in his efforts to seek clarification of aims and improvement of techniques, the individual librarian is right, of course, to persist in his attempts to carry his principles into effect: it is his privilege and duty as a professional man that he may do so, for the benefit of the people he serves.

Nowhere is the need for research more marked than in extension work, for present efforts are diffuse and ineffectual, consisting mainly of lecture courses or book exhibitions. Again, the question of purpose arises. Are those extension features designed to increase the number of readers? Are they fulfilling some need, or are they simply a device for increasing issues? Have they a purpose at all? And if so is that purpose in line with the needs of the individuals within the community concerned? And, again, the questions throw back the fundamental inquiry on what the aim of the library is in the first place. Extension work is fruitless, perhaps vicious, if it results only in increasing indiscriminate reading. Developments must be towards some goal: the reading must have purpose,

[1] Scottish Education Department: Advisory Council on Education, *Report on Libraries, Museums, and Art Galleries* (1951), para. 119.

an end consciously recognized by the reader or sought by him quite unaware.

If librarians do not respect the social considerations it is hardly likely that local-authority members, many of them ignorant of professional detail, will realize the value of the library; the latter are concerned with all the activities of the community, and may see more readily the advantages of more direct influences, such as public health and formal education.

Until the ability to test objectively the usefulness of library work has been achieved by all persons engaged in its government, operation, and advancement, their aims will be obscured and their purposeful endeavours frustrated. Objective assessment of librarianship is not easy, for it involves the recognition of that judgment as humanist and sociological. The immediate praise of existing users of the service, along with an undoubted increase in the quantity of reading tends to lull authorities into a sense of complacency, of satisfaction with what is only a part of the whole task; and impartiality is liable to fall victim to such an attitude.

Human problems are the first which the librarian must recognize and resolve; until he knows what he is attacking he cannot shape his weapons. This demands investigation, and integration with the whole social machine conducting the same inquiries. "Every movement for community welfare should claim his interest and so far as possible his active co-operation."[1] Such an interest means that more library surveys are needed to find out what is required, more investigations on the lines of Groombridge's *The Londoner and his Library*, seeking out what are the reasons for non-use—in short, to find out the shortcomings of a service which can be of much help to many people not now using it and which is yet neglected by them. The conduct of these investigations is again a matter which calls for fuller study by the library profession, for there has been in pseudo-sociology a careless notion that if enough facts are collected the problems will solve themselves. Thus it behoves the surveyor to bear in mind his aims and to consider alternative means to the library for the satisfaction of reading needs. He must also study co-operation with other agencies.

Perhaps as much as anything else he should study the non-users of the public library, and he must decide whether enough effort is

[1] Bailey, Louis J., in *Public Libraries*, vol. xix (1914), p. 388.

being made to adapt the library's organization and its operational methods to the needs of all the people as opposed to the demands of the current users.

In any event the librarian, having studied the needs of the community, will determine more accurately his immediate aims, and he will attempt to create an adequate machinery to achieve these within the framework of the wider, longer-term objectives. But unless these aims are known the library will continue to be directed by the passing whim of people or organizations seeking their own ends, without necessarily bearing in mind the welfare of the community at large. Such a library cannot hope for public respect and support.

One aspect of British public-library objectives has remained constant: the enhancement of the individual, the free opportunity for a person to improve himself by education or recreation as he has seen fit, without external pressures to this or that point of view. Because it is easy to accept the ready-made views pressed on the whole community by the experts, real or self-appointed, of the mass media, the library is an important defence of the individuality of each person in the community, leaving him free to contest or confirm these views, to assess for himself the things which matter to him.

The fullest and noblest significance of the public-library movement will be seen when current social problems are being investigated, alleviated, and overcome by the work of the libraries; when ignorant prejudices are banished in favour of enlightened toleration; when the libraries have stimulated a real desire for learning and are recognized as a universal insurance against ignorance; when the effect of the libraries is felt, directly or indirectly, by every member of the community; when the librarian brings to fruition his function of encouraging reading in those who are at present illiterate; and when the purpose of reading has been realized as a means to the enjoyment of living and the improvement of mankind.

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