

THE SITUATION

The merging of the Yakima Public Library, serving a city of 38,000, housed in a Carnegie Library building built in 1907, with a \$5,000 "temporary" addition built in 1919, with the Yakima County Library, established in 1945, serving a County area of 4,260 square miles, a population of 78,000 and housed in rented quarters a block distant creates the situation back of my problem.

The excellence and interest of the staff, the general good will of the people, the desire of the board for success in this venture; all of these assets point toward improvement of library service in our area.

Another factor in the situation is that the administrator (myself) was the administrator of the County Library - growing up with it, so to speak, and unhampered by tradition, custom or established routines.

The merging of the two libraries of comparable size and comparable inadequacies - creates the need to study administrative problems with a different point of view than was needed for either individual library.

The Yakima Valley Regional Library now has twelve community branches, three bookmobiles, an adult circulation department, a boys and girls department and an active mail service as outlets for service. The headquarters are housed in three buildings. The Carnegie building houses the bookmobile department, the boys and girls room, the adult services to the public. The former County headquarters houses the mail service, branch service, cataloging department, processing and mending, the office, and part of the book stock.

The city hall quarters provide stack room space for magazines five years old and older, and book stock which has not circulated at least in the past five years.

ORGANIZATION OF STAFF IN A REGIONAL LIBRARY

In any library, the vitality and interest of the staff in their work plays an important part of the service the library can give. Ability and background are very important, but unless the added quality of the desire to reach out and share with others the wonderful resources at hand is present, the library can fail to reach its proper level of service to a community, be it a city or a region. However, when one is serving a region of fair size, with some areas rather densely populated and others sparsely populated, the staff attitude becomes even more important.

In the merging of the two libraries in Yakima City and County we hope to deepen the quality of service over the whole area through using the best abilities of each staff member a greater proportion of the time, as well as adding quantity of services by widening our scope to include special services such as adult education and youth work. Instead of having two catalogers doing much the same work in the two separate libraries, one person can do the cataloging, freeing the other to devote more time in helping the public make further and better use of the library facilities.

We are also beginning to realize that more of the time of the headquarters staff, particularly of the specialists on the staff, will be spent in teaching the rest

of us how to enrich our services and less in actually giving the service itself. No one person can reach out to help the individuals of any one group over the entire region. But, as we stimulate the local librarians, the bookmobile staff, the main library staff in the improvement of the reference service, the service to children, to young adults and adult study groups, the quality of our service will deepen. This stimulation must come, however, through leadership and by example, not mandate. Therefore the specialist must not be completely divorced from giving direct service to the public.

So, one of our first objectives becomes that of making the best use of the highest ability of each staff member, not only permitting, but encouraging individual growth, being sure to cover the needs of the library.

Another objective is to develop a unified, integrated staff. Not only does the staff become unified when members work in various departments so that they understand the problems of the bookmobile service, the direct service to the public at the main circulation desk, etc. but the sharing of the problems helps, too. The forbidden statement on our staff is, "It's none of my business, but --". Any problem or situation connected with our library is definitely the business of any member of the staff who becomes aware of it. We are interested in finding the best solution. Often that solution comes from the department handling the situation but not always. Sometimes a member of the clerical staff or someone outside the problem comes up with the best solution. Our desire is to give the library service the benefit of our combined best.

One project we hope to start in September involves the examination of our book collection subject by subject. The situation might well be explained. The city library has acquired a total book stock of 75,243 books since 1906. During those years, 27,902 have been discarded, leaving a total book stock on hand at the end of 1950 of 47,341. Of those, 14,302 have been added in the past five years. The books have had extensive use. The total circulation since 1906 has been over 5½ million, which means that each book has had an average circulation of 76.8 times.

The county library, since 1945, has acquired a total book stock of 56,227 of which 2,148 have been withdrawn, leaving 54,079 on hand. These books have been circulated over a million times, or an average of 18.4 each.

We know that the books in the 500 class, for example, need careful weeding and evaluation. Science books become out-of-date so quickly now that even those only five years old may be out-moded. We want to look at our collection in many different ways, not only from the point of view of what we should discard, replace or add, but also with the following questions in mind! What do we have for the young child? the older boys and girls? the young adult, and the general reader? the specialist? What is available on the bookmobiles, in the branches, in the circulation collection, in the reference? Which titles should we duplicate and in which areas should we strive for a spread of titles, rather than duplication?

We hope that the result will be a growing understanding of our general and specific needs; that more and more we will find ourselves sending adults to the Boys and Girls room for beginning books both for themselves and their children; that children will be sent up or brought up to be introduced to the young adult or adult collections to satisfy their special needs. In other words, we shall work as a team to insure proper service and make the best use of our staff and our collection of books.

We wish to prevent boundary lines from being drawn not only between departments but also between professional and clerical staff members. For example, I have a personal prejudice against the phrase, "I'll have 'my girl' do it." In my thinking, the staff does not work for me. All of us work for the library. The clerical assistants who work in any department are there because they are better qualified to do certain types of work, just as library school graduates are better qualified to do other types of work . . . But, while I believe that shelving of books, for example, should be done by pages, if for some reason the most important thing at the moment is to get some books shelved, I have no respect for any of us if we don't get busy and shelve those books. But if the professional staff is clicking, work will be organized in such a way that that particular situation will not arise very often.

It is not enough for our headquarters and central library staff to work as a unit. We also wish to prevent boundary line between the local librarians and them. Our local librarians, many of whom work ten hours a week or less in their libraries, must also have a feeling of belonging. We must back them up in the giving of excellent service to their community.

At least once a year, and it should be more frequently, they come to Yalcina for a meeting. We try to plan our program from their point of view. That is not so easy as you might think. Our first meeting or two fell far short. It is too easy to bore them with details important to us, but not to them. Their time with us and with each other is limited and should be taken up with matters of particular concern or interest to them. We have also tried to get each new local librarian to spend a day with us at headquarters and go through the day's routines. It is the best means we have discovered to open their eyes to the services they can give, to the reasons behind our forms and routines. Furthermore, they leave with a greater feeling of being an important part of an organization which gives them friendly expert backing.

We hope to find more means of including them in our family, even though miles separate us, as well as the fact that we work full time, while they have the library as only one of the interests and responsibilities.

Because personality and the personal equation plays such an important part in any work where people are concerned, it seems that too much emphasis cannot be given to the importance of the problems involved. In all these problems we must remember that our frame of reference must be--what will result in the best library service! However, as long as we keep that in mind, staff welfare and growth and unity are important in themselves as well as being the means of giving careful, expert service to the public.

The third objective is to provide each member an area of responsibility. It is well to be flexible, but each person must have a specific job about which he makes the decisions and for which he is responsible.

The work must be organized efficiently. Studies such as have been made by Edward A. Wight and Watson O'D. Pierce should prove valuable guides. Not only are we anxious to organize the work so that typing, for example, is done by expert typists, and reference work done by experts in that field, but routines should be examined carefully in order to eliminate unnecessary work.

Finally, care should be taken to distribute the work so that each staff member has a reasonable load. Then, in cases of emergency, we can absorb an additional piece of work with equanimity. Otherwise if each staff member is working at top speed, with the heaviest possible duty, an emergency is apt to become a catastrophe. All resiliency has been used up.

BUDGETING FOR A REGIONAL LIBRARY

The city library has had a history of inadequate financial support. The state of the library building, the hard-working book stock and the heavy staff load all point to this fact. Since the contract calls for 1.81 mills support from the city subject to revision, it would seem fair to budget on the basis of two mills from the city as well as from the Rural County Library District.

The budget should be planned so that existing services can be strengthened. Some of the possibilities in this connection are:

Scheduling of city bookmobile for greater service.

- a. cover more areas of the city
- b. strengthen service to children at school stops
- c. more hours of service.

Increasing film service.

- a. provide more films
- b. interest groups in varied use of films

Add desirable services.

- a. Circulating phonograph record collection
- b. Circulating picture collection

Since our regional library will have a budget of over \$100,000, we need to re-examine our expenditures with our peculiar needs in mind. We are no longer a small library. We need to recognize some of the differences. Probably we cannot do too much about it the first year or two because we must continue to maintain two separate establishments. The fact that our book collection is so inadequate for our needs will probably mean that we should spend more proportionately for books than will be necessary later, when services will have to be emphasized. We must point out that we are doing this, however, for the general thinking in our area is that libraries are collections of books and the staff is a questionable item when it comes to the spending of money.

WORKING TOWARD A BUILDING PROGRAM

The first emphasis, even in the building program, must be the emphasis on service. A library building does not insure nor constitute library service. However, when quarters are crowded, poor work space available, and the staff and books have to be located in two and three different buildings, for no other reason than lack of space, the lack of proper housing hampers library service.

We have an interesting situation. The library owns the best available building site in town. It is one block off Yakima Avenue on a street that is building up. A beautiful new bank building is being built directly behind it, just across

the alley. A million dollar city hall is kitty-corner in the block, and houses the police department and city-county health departments.

Business interests covet the site for business. The library interests appreciate its merits for library service.

The Friends of the Library has been having as its goal for at least six years, the building of a new library. The year Tacoma voted its money, Yakima failed to carry its proposed bond issue by a very small margin. Since then a new memorial hospital, a new city hall, and a new hotel have been built.

The supporters of the Y.M.C.A. want a new building. The Chamber of Commerce wants one or two overpasses built over the railroad which divides the city. Therefore, the prospects of having a new library building in the near future would seem quite hopeless.

However, a chain of events has taken place which makes us hopeful once more. Our state librarian showed the editor of our local papers a pamphlet called MORROW'S LIBRARY. He told me about it. In this pamphlet, Angus Snead Macdonald tells of a hypothetical library which builds a combination business and library building. We borrowed the pamphlet from the State Library and circulated it among a few leaders. An architect, a conservative real estate man, the president of the Friends of the Library and the Mayor were all truly interested and favorably impressed.

We tried to buy a few copies, but fortunately the pamphlet was not available through our regular dealers, so we wrote Mr. Macdonald himself with the result that he gave us ten copies, and has sent us other material and help.

If this idea is good for us in Yakima, and so far, we think it may be; we are hopeful of reasonably speedy action.

First of all, it unifies the two opposing factions, one of whom rocked on its heels and said, "Get off that corner and let business in,-- or else." The other just as doggedly retorted, "Only over our dead bodies will the library be pushed off their corner." Now, they won't have to expend their energy fighting each other. Each is getting his own way.

Secondly, it should gain the support of the Y.M.C.A. and overpass enthusiasts because one of the reasons for the combination building is that the rent finances the cost of the building. Neither public nor private funds will need to be tapped to provide a library. It will offer no competition for those other two projects.

Finally, the taxpayers should rally, for here will be a public building built without raising their taxes one cent.

The problem is: How to stimulate action! The seed has been planted. We want to harvest a crop.

What should the board do? Our chairman thinks perhaps a citizens' advisory committee should be appointed. If so, I'm sure it should have representatives

of different groups in town; that friends of the board should not be appointed on the basis of friendship; that all interests should be represented by leaders.

How can we make the best use of our display advertising space to help this along?

What should the Friends of the Library be doing?

When we discover the answers to the above questions we will be well on our way toward solving one of our major problems.

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