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ABSTRACT

This booklet was prepared in recognition of the 25th anniversary of the watershed Adult Education Act of 1966, and in acknowledgement of the key role that libraries have played in U.S. adult education throughout the century. Written by library educators, the two commissioned papers that make up the booklet describe the role of public libraries in adult education since 1900. In the first paper, "Beginnings: Public Libraries and Adult Education from 1900 to 1966," Margaret E. Monroe traces the development of literacy education in the context of library adult education from the beginning of the 20th century until 1966. In the second paper, "The Developing Role of Public Libraries in Adult Education: 1966 to 1991," Kathleen M. Heim reviews the contributions of libraries and librarians to literacy, lifelong learning, and adult education over the past 25 years. The booklet concludes with a list of 117 selected readings which relate to the theme of libraries and adult education. (MAB)

PARTNERS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING: PUBLIC LIBRARIES & ADULT EDUCATION

OFFICE OF LIBRARY PROGRAMS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

Adult Education Act

Silver Anniversary
1966–1991

Toward A Literate America

PARTNERS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING: PUBLIC LIBRARIES & ADULT EDUCATION

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and
Kathleen M. Heim

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Foreword

In 1966, Congress approved the first adult education legislation in the nation's history. Twenty-five years later, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education and the Library of Congress' Center for the Book are jointly sponsoring a celebration of that event.

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement wishes to contribute to the occasion through the publication of *Partners for Lifelong Learning: Public Libraries and Adult Education*. Public libraries have played a key role in adult education throughout the century. The Adult Education Act of 1966 was a watershed in that history. This booklet, consisting of two commissioned papers written by library educators, describes the role of public libraries in adult education since 1900.

Many agencies and individuals are working to help realize the National Education Goa for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning, that states "by the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship." This is one of six national education goals for the year 2000 adopted by the President and the governors in 1990. AMERICA 2000--the President's strategy for achieving the goals--envisions a Nation of Students continuing to learn throughout their lives. The public library is the only major educational agency that serves all clients, regardless of age. It offers programs and resources in abundance. As such, the public library is in a unique position to nurture lifelong learning.

It is our hope that this booklet will help to enrich understanding of the public library's role in this critical area. And, we further hope that improved understanding will translate into action, with adult education agencies and public libraries working together even more effectively to serve educationally disadvantaged adults.

DIANE RAVITCH
Assistant Secretary and
Counselor to the Secretary
Office of Educational Research
and Improvement

Acknowledgments

Partners for Lifelong Learning: Public Libraries and Adult Education contributes to the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Adult Education Act. To develop this publication, we invited two outstanding library educators who have written extensively in the area of library-based adult education programs: Margaret Monroe and Kathleen Heim. Margaret Monroe, retired director of the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is the author of *Library Adult Education: The Biography of an Idea*, which gave important direction to the public library movement in adult education in the mid-1960s. Kathleen Heim, now dean of the graduate school, Louisiana State University, and former dean of that institution's School of Library and Information Science, is coeditor of the recent *Adult Services: An Enduring Focus for Public Libraries*, which presents a new way of looking at roles public libraries can play in the literacy movement.

I am grateful to both authors.

RAY FRY
Acting Director
Office of Library Programs

Contents

Introduction

Since the turn of the century, public libraries have worked steadily to contribute to the betterment of the quality of life for all American citizens. This is especially true in the areas of adult literacy and lifelong learning.

To achieve this goal, public librarians have systematically attempted to refine their philosophy of service as well as to better articulate that philosophy to the public. Like any profession, they have sometimes fought change, but more often they have initiated change.

While at one time the public library may have been the only adult literacy provider in a community, today it is often one of many. To continue to meet the changing needs of its constituents, the public library must demonstrate a flexibility that allows its services to complement and supplement the services of other providers. And the public library has been quite successful doing just that. The following papers provide some sense of the many different activities that the public library has undertaken to reach and teach people.

Over the years, the public library's search to meet community needs has led it to fill a unique role in helping people achieve their desires for literacy and lifelong learning: a role of which it is justifiably proud. It has been called the People's University: a public agency serving the information needs of all citizens throughout their lives.

Now with adult literacy and lifelong learning established as one of the National Education Goals to be achieved by the year 2000, the contributions of public libraries are needed more than ever.

Recognizing this, the authors point out the public library's history of success and innovation and its demonstrated, long-term commitment to literacy and lifelong learning. In effect, they make a case for the involvement of public libraries, in partnership with other literacy providers, in addressing this National Education Goal. After all, when it comes to partners, what better partner could one want than the People's University?

Beginnings: Public Libraries and Adult Education from 1900 to 1966

Margaret E. Monroe

Public librarians greeted with interest and enthusiasm passage of the Adult Education Act of 1966 (Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Amendments of 1966). It reinforced a thrust in public library service that began as early as the mid-nineteenth century as the public library tried to meet the diverse needs of individuals in the context of social necessities and community readiness.

The purpose of the 1966 act was "to encourage and expand basic educational programs for adults," enabling them to overcome English language limitations, improve occupational competence, and become more productive and responsible citizens. Programs would be designed for individuals over 18 years of age, with less than 12 years of formal education, and not currently enrolled in school.

The 1966 act strengthened the role of public libraries in providing adult basic education. Under the new act, public libraries--in cooperation with public schools--were eligible to receive federal dollars to develop adult basic education programs. This partnership proved significant for public libraries and adult basic education. It represented a change in policy from the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act which initiated federal support for adult basic education programs.

This paper traces the development of literacy education in the context of library adult education from the beginning of the 20th century until 1966.

Roots of Literacy Education in Library Adult Education

Nineteenth-century public librarianship focused on serving the literate public with a good library collection. The object was to enhance literacy skills and good taste in reading through access to and use of "good books." [1] Even in the mid-1920s, the retiring director of Baltimore's Enoch Pratt Free Library, in committing his institution to adult education, pledged encouragement of "self-education" through provision of the library's collection of good books--an echo of the 1854 Report of the Boston Public Library. [2] The adult education movement in the 1920s supported librarians' efforts to promote "good books" through exhibits, displays, and reading lists. Gradually, reading guidance became the focus of what librarians widely considered "adult education."

The adult education movement in the United States evolved from three chief sources. The 1919 Report of the Adult Education Committee of the British Ministry of Reconstruction gave worldwide visibility to adult education. The experience of the American Library Association (ALA) in providing books and advisory services to servicemen during World War I opened public librarians' eyes to the effectiveness of reading guidance. These two tinderboxes of ideas were ignited by Frederick P. Keppel, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, when he commissioned William S. Learned's study of the potential of the American public library as an agency for adult education. With the publication of Learned's *The American Public Library and the Diffusion of Knowledge* in 1924, the rationale for the public library to assume a role in adult education was in place. [3]

Learned's perceptive synthesis of services already initiated by some public libraries made his vision believable. He saw the public library as a community reference service organized by subject departments and staffed by subject experts to provide information and guidance. The public library would prepare brief

reading courses for people wishing to pursue organized independent study; it would become a community institute enhanced by lectures, art galleries, and museums. He envisioned the creation of "a genuine community university bringing intelligence systematically and persuasively to bear on all adult affairs." [4]

In 1920, librarians proposed an ALA "Enlarged Program" to build on what had been achieved in providing books and advisory services to servicemen overseas during World War I. The attractiveness of the ideas drew a multitude of "enlargements" from quite diverse viewpoints, and the "Enlarged Program" collapsed, a bloated and unmanageable monstrosity. Supporters of the original proposal were nevertheless ready to shape the Learned sketch to their own needs. With the Carnegie Corporation ready to support steps in this direction, the "Reading With a Purpose" series of planned reading programs was begun under the ALA aegis in 1925. Essentially a readers advisory service, this was the first official step in library adult education. [5]

Frederick P. Keppel and the Carnegie Corporation staff provided the leadership and financial support necessary to initiate such a totally new public library program. Their encouragement of library-sponsored book discussion and their invitational conferences of public library directors to consider these new directions in library service bore fruit. Simultaneously, however, resistance to such strong "outside" leadership led eventually to ALA's rejection of what its conservative leadership felt was domination of ALA by the Carnegie Corporation. Alvin Johnson's *The Public Library--A People's University*, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation and published in 1938, urged an activist role for library adult education and was the final outrage to conservative public librarians. [6]

Readability measures and acquiring books written in a simple, readable style became a less controversial focus for the development of public library service. These two issues were typically associated with the Teachers College, Columbia University's Reading Laboratory experiments. "Humanizing knowledge," as interpreted by James Harvey Robinson in 1923 and as developed by Stuart Chase and others during the 1930s and 1940s, was viewed as support to library adult education. [7] All this was seen in the context of serving the "new literate," the first real articulation of "literacy" concerns in the context of library adult education.

Carnegie Corporation's last major effort to assist the public library to integrate adult education into its services came in the corporation's 1938 Princeton conference. Conclusions from that conference of public library directors and adult education specialists focused on:

- The importance of diffusing the adult education responsibility throughout the entire library, rather than relying on a special department;
- Offering library services to groups as well as individuals;
- Availability of more readable materials for the non-specialist reader;
- Addition of films to the library collection;
- Community analysis as the basis for planning library activities; and
- Infusion of the "adult education point of view" into basic library education courses.

The impact of this Princeton conference was notable. A number of libraries dropped the special designation of "readers advisers" and placed their emphasis once again on collecting "good books." [8]

The political events in Europe in 1939 and 1940 brought national concern for democracy to the fore, and library adult education moved to focus on group activities in support of the democratic society. The ALA Adult Education Board's proposal to the ALA Council, approved in June 1942, phrased a new responsibility to the adult reader: the public library should make books on "socially significant questions" abundantly available. [9] This was a new phase of library adult education, with a focus on informed citizenship and critical thinking.

Group discussion programs on Great Issues and on War and Postwar Issues led more or less directly to the Great Books Program sponsored by the University of Chicago in 1945. In 1951, the Ford Foundation's Fund for Adult Education began its extended support of ALA's library adult education thrust with a grant to carry nationwide the ALA's American Heritage Project discussion programs. By 1954, more than 13 percent of the nation's public libraries were sponsoring Great Books discussion groups, and 9.6 percent sponsored American Heritage programs. This was at a time when fewer than 1 percent of public libraries provided literacy programs. [10] During the early 1950s, library adult education was focused on small group book and film discussion.

By the 1950s, ALA--under the leadership of Grace T. Stevenson--expanded the focus of "adult education" to include analysis of community needs. The Lyman Survey in 1954 had shown that only 364 public libraries conducted such studies, and of the 1,328 that did not, only 146 expressed an interest in doing so. [11] Eventually, the broad application of ALA's initiative in the

Library-Community Project was realized. Interagency cooperation and public library participation in community educational planning came to be important components of library adult education.

In her 1981 review of library adult education, Lynn E. Birge noted that the elaborate and dynamic model for library adult education developed by a few public library systems in the 1950s was reluctantly eyed by the large majority of public librarians. There was a professional unwillingness, Birge concluded, "to meet the challenge which William Learned and Alvin Johnson had posed many years before." [12]

Until library education programs integrated the adult education focus into the basic course program and until professional public library standards required attention to the major elements of such service, library adult education remained as a shining but exceptional example within perhaps 20 to 30 major library systems. Very slowly, the majority of public libraries absorbed some of the challenging aspects of adult education service: lively exhibits, guided reading through bibliographies, reading guidance to individual adult students, a focus on socially significant literature, and assistance to community group study and enterprise.

During the 1960s, however, great economic and social changes once again forced open the minds of the majority of public librarians. Then new perspectives became possible in library adult education. A concern for the massive numbers of functionally illiterate people, both foreign-born and native-born, came to flower in the early 1960s. Did public libraries address that concern before 1966 and, if so, how?

The Development of Library Adult Literacy Services

Among the earliest of public library services to special groups was "service to the foreign-born." Even in 1913, the Milwaukee Public Library reported provision of "good books" and "good books about America" in the native languages of the newcomers. The Detroit Public Library in 1918 had extensive collections in French, German and Polish, and good reading collections in 18 additional languages, to meet the needs of Detroit's foreign-born. The Woodstock Branch of the New York Public Library in 1920 reported a wide array of adult education activities for the foreign-born, especially focused on basic education. Immigrants in detention quarters in Seattle were provided books, in both native languages and in English, as well as pamphlets and cards of introduction to the Seattle Public Library, alerting the staff to the immigrants' need for special assistance. [13]

The New York Public Library, many of whose branches served particular national or ethnic enclaves within the city, developed a mature philosophy in service to the foreign-born. "Americanization" was typically rejected as a basic goal. Protection of the cultures native to the immigrants was seen as equal in importance to helping them live in their new country. Viewing the branch library as a neighborhood cultural center, sponsoring public school classes in English for adults, introducing adult school classes to the library, presenting lectures and concerts, and involving neighborhood leaders in sponsorship of library events, all were widespread activities throughout the New York Public Library branch system. [14]

In 1910, approximately half the population of Manhattan and the Bronx were foreign-born, and even in 1920 one-third of the population were immigrant people. [15] Typical library staffing in this period included "foreign assistants," professional librarians who spoke the languages and shared the cultural backgrounds of

the neighborhood population. Developing services for the foreign-born drew the public library into cooperation with public schools and literacy classes in meeting this urgent social need.

The term "adult education" was not consciously used in relation to services for the foreign-born until the 1930s. Gertrude Finkel, a foreign assistant, commented much later: "We foreign assistants felt like Moliere's Would-Be Gentleman, who discovered in old age that he had been speaking prose all his life!" [16]

The pattern of public library service to the foreign-born from 1910 to the 1920s included most of the elements which later came to be considered "library adult education": supply of library materials selected to meet the learning needs of this special public; cooperation with other community organizations providing adult instruction, with the library providing meeting rooms, publicity, and reading materials; provision of reading guidance to class groups or on a one-to-one counseling basis; sponsorship of events (festivals, concerts, lectures) or small group programs (mothers' clubs, discussion programs); service as a community center. In the 1920s, however, actual instruction in literacy skills was typically seen as the province of the public school teachers or their recruited volunteers. It was considered outside the province of public librarians.

The Library Contexts for Adult Literacy

The Adult Education Act of 1966 defined precisely its use of the term "adult education" as "adult basic education": those programs which developed skills in speaking, reading, or writing the English language in order to "get or retain employment," to "benefit from occupational training," and to make the learners "better able to

meet their adult responsibilities." [17] The nature of those "adult responsibilities"--whether as parents, as employers or employees, or as citizens--was not identified.

The MacDonald survey, Literacy Activities in Public Libraries, conducted in 1964 and 1965, focused on the instruction of "new literates" in reading skills and on the public library's role of supplying materials for such learning. The need for literacy in mathematics, in map reading, in filling out job applications or tax forms, in voting or in informed voting--all of these developments in the definition of literacy or of adult basic education had not yet emerged. [18] The definitions of levels of literacy, from "illiterate" through "functionally illiterate" to "limited literacy" and "mature reader" still lay ahead. [19] All this was implicit and undefined until after the Adult Education Act of 1966. Reading skills in 1966 were still the fundamental focus for literacy, and literacy was still the fundamental focus for public library involvement in adult basic education.

Public libraries from the 1920s to the 1960s made innovations in services for their traditional, literate users under the banner of library adult education. Once these services had become incorporated into the professional repertoire, they were seen to apply also to the newly literate adult user. "Workers' Education" (or "Work with Labor") brought book collections and reading guidance to literate and, increasingly, to illiterate workers from the 1920s to 1950s. In the 1930s and 1940s, programs on consumer education and citizen education focused on film and pamphlet materials, with speakers visiting community groups. "Critical Reading" in the book discussion programs of the 1940s and the 1950s helped to shape literacy education in the 1960s and later.

Public libraries were innovative in developing and adapting modes of service that could be applied to literacy services. This is

evidenced by the many and varied activities that public libraries would eventually undertake in this area:

- Supply of reading materials for class use, either within the library or lent to such other sponsors of literacy education as the public schools;

- Talks about library services and provision of library cards to groups or individuals engaged in literacy study;

- Counseling on the selection of reading materials to teachers, to groups, or to individual "new literates";

- Instruction in skills in the use of the library and its basic tools;

- Cooperative planning with community groups to bring the library resources to bear on the meeting of community needs; and

- Collaboration among libraries to encourage the publication of needed reading materials.

The librarian's role as instructor to groups or individuals on a sustained tutorial basis, however, was typically viewed as appropriate only in the area of library skills until after the 1960s. [20,21]

Beyond the intellectual skills that formed the substance of adult basic education, the social contexts which gave urgency to adult basic education affected its definition. The flood of immigrants into the large east and west coast cities as well as into the Midwest port cities (Cleveland, Chicago, Milwaukee) from 1900 to 1920 built the pressures for literacy in English. World War I made essential the use of immigrant manpower in factories and

agriculture. The Great Depression of the 1930s made literacy an essential skill in competition for employment. Nazi persecution of the Jewish populations brought many educated but illiterate-in-English immigrants to our large cities as well as to some smaller communities. The manpower potential of these new urban residents was greatly needed in support of the war effort in the 1940s. Literacy education in public libraries was one response of librarians to the need for a literate population in industrial and service occupations at that time.

The social upheavals of World War II drew thousands of semi-literate rural Appalachian folk into mainstream employment. Following World War II, many military personnel chose not to return to rural life, and the need to upgrade their reading skills became evident as they abandoned agriculture and entered industrial and service occupations. Between 1920 and 1965, rural areas lost 30 million people to urban areas. [22] Compounding that, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s emerged as a strong motivator to upgrading educational skills. By 1964, adult basic education had come to the forefront of national consciousness.

The new urban residents were composed of several distinct population groups: rural Appalachian and southern poor whites, rural Afro-Americans, Native Americans leaving the reservations, and migrant workers from Mexico and Central America. The Afro-American population in the largest U.S. cities doubled or tripled between 1940 and 1960. [23] Native American influx into the cities resulted in a dramatic change in federal government policy with the Relocation Program of 1951, which threatened the liquidation of tribal organization. The University of Chicago's 1960 study of the American Indian dilemma underlay, in part, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society Program of 1965. Out of these social shifts and turmoil the adult basic education movement built its impetus. [24]

Because employment opportunities and better income were the object of much of this migration, the motivation to achieve literacy skills was fairly high. While friends and relatives cushioned the harsh impact of urban migration, nevertheless there was increasing need for urban information centers to provide direction to employment, housing, and welfare assistance. Public libraries responded. Support of literacy skills in the context of adult basic education was a dominant feature of that response.

Literacy Services in 1954 and 1966

It was in this social context that two studies of public library activities in the field of literacy took place: Helen Lyman's *Adult Education Activities in Public Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1954) and Bernice MacDonald's *Literacy Activities in Public Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1966).

The Lyman study portrays literacy training as an occasional service in public libraries in the early 1950s. Within this study--which covered the broad scope of all library adult education activities--were two literacy components: "fundamental reading instruction" and "remedial reading instruction." The 1,692 public library agencies surveyed reported these literacy-related activities least often of any book-related programs. While 3.6 percent of the largest libraries reported providing such service, 9 percent of the libraries in the smallest communities reported providing fundamental reading instruction. Presumably, smaller communities had fewer special literacy programs; thus public libraries met the needs as best they could. Eight percent indicated an interest in providing such instruction. [25] Clearly, this was in no way comparable to the more than 80 percent providing exhibits and displays, or the 50 percent providing library book programs.

Bernice MacDonald's survey of literacy activities in 1964-65 was not a broad statistical survey but rather an analytical interview-based investigation. Nevertheless, it showed the impact of the economic and population shifts nationwide. The new urban illiterates of the mid-1960s were largely native-born Americans. The 1960 U.S. Census reported 8.3 million adults as functionally illiterate, that is, with less than 5 years of formal schooling. Viewed as "potential library users," this group was a sizable proportion of the urban population that presented a challenge to providers of library service.

During the early 1960s, there was a rapidly accelerating literacy movement with large urban libraries increasingly involved. The movement was spawned, in large part, by economic pressures for a truly literate workforce--pressures brought to bear in passage of the Manpower and Development Training Act of 1963 and the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. [26] Public libraries responded in a variety of ways to meet the social need, as the MacDonald Report documents.

As early as 1957, the Yakima Valley (Washington) Regional Library cosponsored the LARK (Literacy and Related Knowledge) Foundation in its initial years of literacy education (reading, writing, and mathematics). This became a statewide and regional program, sponsored by women's clubs, public libraries, and volunteers. The public library's role was to stimulate interest, initiate activities, and provide space and book materials. LARK came to have a major impact on literacy in the Northwest.

In the early 1960s, the Kalamazoo (Michigan) Public Library was shocked into action by the discovery that 3 percent of that small city's population were illiterate and that 7.5 percent had less than 5 years of formal schooling (functionally illiterate). The library moved quickly to establish an attractive, well-equipped Adult Reading Center, well stocked with books, films, filmstrips, and

recordings for adult literacy education. A skilled staff member worked part-time at first and then full-time to develop the program of classes, counseling, and work with literacy instructors. This small-city model became useful to other community libraries seeking to fill the same need.

More shocking still was the 13 percent rate of illiteracy in Dallas, as reported by the 1960 U.S. Census. To help meet the need, the Dallas Public Library joined forces with Operation LIFT (Literacy Instruction for Texas) which was working through 29 centers with a televised series of lessons. The library's major contribution was identifying useful adult reading materials for the program.

In 1965, the Cleveland Public Library became active in a city-wide literacy program using the Words in Color technique developed by Encyclopedia Britannica. The library housed such programs, provided publicity, and helped to recruit participants. In addition, it sponsored two "reading aloud" groups to support and reinforce the learning of the "new literates." Analysis of the need for effective reading materials for adult new readers was, however, the library's major contribution.

The New York Public Library, the Brooklyn Public Library, and the Free Library of Philadelphia--located in the heart of the publishing world--made their major contribution by expressing to publishers and to authors the need for materials for new adult readers. In 1964, conferences of both the American Book Publishers Council and the American Textbook Publishers Institute included program sessions conducted by public librarians on the new potential market for easy-to-read trade books for adult "new literates." Marie Davis, coordinator of adult services in the Free Library of Philadelphia, brought together 80 librarians with representatives from the publishing world (Doubleday; Holt, Rinehart, and Winston; Noble and Noble; Westminster Press), the Philadelphia Writers Conference, and a writers' group of the

American Association of University Women. Both writers and publishers planned for action as a result of discussions on the reading needs of the undereducated and of Afro-Americans who were swept up in the new surge for educational upgrading. [27] These were notable steps taken in behalf of national literacy.

Nevertheless, most public library involvement in the literacy education of the mid-1960s was still auxiliary to the work of literacy organizations. MacDonald reported that teachers and supervisors in literacy education seldom used the library, and that students were seen as having no time to use the library. [28]

With the publication of the MacDonald Report in 1966, however, the model-setting urban programs became visible nationally. Library conferences and workshops on literacy services brought close to public librarians across the nation the understanding and skills that had enabled Philadelphia, Dallas, Cleveland, Kalamazoo, and Yakima Valley to serve the illiterate and "new literate."

More significant, however, was the federal funding for services to illiterate adults that became available in the mid-1960s. The Adult Education Act of 1966 was a landmark in formally linking literacy education with adult basic education programs. This occurred at the same time that the first of a series of Library Services and Construction Acts was being passed. (Most notable in the area of adult literacy education are Titles I, IV, and VI.) Without such funding, the best professional perception of need and the most urgent sense of readiness to meet the challenge of illiteracy would have languished. What the Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation's Fund for Adult Education had earlier nourished in infancy, the federal government's support would make viable. The Adult Education Act of 1966 reflects the vision and commitment of that period. In the years that followed, the federal government's support enabled the public library to

accomplish a great deal in adult basic education, through library literacy programs for adults that are easily accessible and tailored to community needs.

Notes

1. Robert Ellis Lee, *Continuing Education for Adults through the American Public Library* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1966), 9.

2. Margaret E. Monroe, *Library Adult Education: The Biography of an Idea* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 1963), 131.

3. Lee, op. cit., 45; Malcolm S. Knowles, *A History of the Adult Education Movement in the United States* (Huntington, New York: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1977), 102; Monroe, op. cit., 28.

4. William S. Learned, *The American Public Library and the Diffusion of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1924), 38-9, 55.

5. Monroe, op. cit., 20-40.

6. Ibid., 44-50.

7. James Harvey Robinson, *The Humanizing of Knowledge* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1923); Lynn E. Birge, *Serving Adult Learners; A Public Library Tradition* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1981), 36-47.

8. Monroe, op. cit., 40-50.

9. "ALA Redefines Wartime Policy," *ALA Bulletin* 36 (July 1942), 428.

10. Helen Lyman, *Adult Education Activities in Public Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1954), 38, 41.

11. Ibid., 17, 21, 65.

12. Birge, op. cit., 82.

13. Ibid., 37.

14. Monroe, op. cit., 278-82.

15. Ibid., 278.

16. Ibid., 281.

17. U.S. Public Law 89-750 (November 3, 1966), *Title III, Adult Education,* section 303, "Definitions."

18. Bernice MacDonald, *Literacy Activities in Public Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1966).

19. Helen Lyman, *Literacy and the Nation's Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1977), 15.

20. MacDonald, op. cit., 21-22.

21. Lyman, *Adult Education Activities,* 28-29.

22. Andre Lee Blevins, Jr., "Rural to Urban Migration of Poor Anglos, Mexican Americans, and Negroes." (Ph.D. dissertation. Austin, Texas: University of Texas, 1970).

23. Carroll Peterson Horton and Jessie Carney Smith, eds., *Statistical Record of Black America* (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1990), 518.

24. Wayne Charles Miller, Faye Nell Vowell, et al., *A Comprehensive Bibliography for the Study of American Minorities* (II) (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 783-802.

25. Lyman, *Adult Education Activities,* 17-25.

26. MacDonald, op. cit., 1-3.

27. Ibid., 19-31.

28. Ibid., 7.

The Developing Role of Public Libraries in Adult Education: 1966 to 1991

Kathleen M. Heim

The public library provides its constituents with something no other public agency can: the opportunity for lifelong learning. It is this commitment *to all* that differentiates it from other public agencies and public services. In fact, the public library has been observed as "the only major educational institution with a mandate for covering the entire life-span of its clients." [1]

Not only does the public library serve users across their life-spans, it serves them at all levels of their abilities. People from all walks of life with widely varying levels of reading and comprehension abilities find the public library a source of help. Staff experienced in accessing information, locating sources, organizing activities with other agencies, and linking patrons with these resources make the public library a logical focal point for the learning society. [2]

The concept of the public library as an agency that provides all people the opportunity for lifelong learning is not a new one. Public libraries assumed this role almost from their beginning. Therefore, upon the observance of the silver anniversary of the Adult Education Act, it is important to recognize the contributions of libraries and librarians to literacy and lifelong learning over the past 25 years. This review of the role of the public library in adult education is especially fitting at this time. A current priority of the U.S. Department of Education's Division of Adult

Education and Literacy is to coordinate and integrate services under the Adult Education Act with those of related federal programs. [3]

Historically, issues of literacy and lifelong learning have been fundamental considerations of library philosophy and practice. Helen Lyman's trio of influential volumes published in the 1970s [4,5,6] provides a foundation for understanding literacy concerns while Margaret Monroe's classic work from the 1960s, *Library Adult Education: The Biography of an Idea*, [7] provides a historical viewpoint that has great relevancy for the current understanding of the role of public libraries in any educational area. [8]

The sustained but complex history of issues relating to literacy and lifelong learning in libraries includes the story of the movement from a concern for a higher level of literacy (spread of knowledge, understanding, vocational and civic skills) [9] to supplying materials and space for classes; recruiting students; and following up with reading guidance and information to adult new literates. [10]

Federal Support for Library-Based Literacy Projects

Since the mid-1960s, library-based literacy programs have received various levels of federal support under the Library Services and Construction Act. In particular, three of the programs administered by the Office of Library Programs have stimulated the development of literacy programs in libraries. They are: the Library Research and Demonstration Program, Title II-B of the Higher Education Act (HEA); Public Library Services, Title I of the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA); and the Library Literacy Program, LSCA Title VI.

Under these funding programs, the Office of Library Programs has provided funding for important benchmark projects, including the research done by Lyman at the University of Wisconsin at Madison: *Library Materials in Services to the Adult New Reader* (1967-71). From this project emanated a fundamental understanding of the social characteristics and reading behavior of new readers.

Other examples of baseline research and development projects funded under HEA II-B, Library Research and Demonstration Program, are:

- The Right to Read for Adults, a cooperative program with the Model Cities and Adult Basic Education Department of the City School District of Rochester (1972);

- Cooperative Planning to Maximize Adult Basic Education Opportunities through Public Library Extension in Appalachian North Carolina (1972-73);

- The Interrelating of Library and Basic Educational Services for Disadvantaged Adults (1972-73); and

- Libraries in Literacy (1979-80), a survey of literacy programs in libraries to develop a base of information on the nature and extent of literacy activities in libraries. [11]

These projects demonstrate linkages between libraries and adult basic education, the development of literacy materials, and an understanding of the needs of new readers.

Beginning in 1970, funding available under LSCA Title I, Public Library Services, was used to support literacy projects in the states. Although the range of library-based literacy projects funded under Title I appeared to be diverse and creative, the import of these efforts was somewhat difficult to determine. Nevertheless, the potential of libraries as literacy providers had attracted interest.

In 1980, the Libraries in Literacy Survey (funded under HEA II-B, Library Research and Demonstration Program) was undertaken to identify the extent to which libraries were involved in literacy education as well as the types of literacy education services provided. [12] In part, the study also was undertaken to recognize that the increased participation of all types of libraries in the national literacy effort required a systematic, nationally based body of data. [13]

Findings showed that of the 160 public libraries surveyed, 53 percent provided literacy services. The survey also showed that library involvement in literacy education was usually "reactive"--libraries became involved because literacy education providers and community groups made them aware of unmet needs. Usually the absence or unavailability of other literacy education providers led the public library to assume the role of literacy provider.

Perhaps the initial involvement with literacy education providers and community groups is what led the public library to cooperate with other agencies to provide literacy services. The survey showed that public libraries demonstrated a high level of cooperation with other agencies. Although most of these cooperative efforts were informal, they were for the most part continuous. [14] The findings of the survey are important, as they present the commitment of libraries to the literacy effort, often in collaboration with adult basic education programs.

The survey was published at a time when many literacy efforts were under way, but reports of their progress had no broad dissemination. Reference to this study is essential to demonstrate the range and depth of library involvement in literacy services.

Further, it is interesting to note that public libraries were able to generate so many of their literacy activities with such minimal funding. Much of the funding that public libraries used to develop model programs and to participate in literacy efforts was made available under LSCA Title I.

The LSCA Title I program encouraged and supported community-based efforts rooted in the analysis of state and local needs. While its overall impact has not been monolithic, it has been sustained and steady as libraries have strengthened the grassroots foundation for literacy support. This strength came from the evolving theory and philosophy of planning and role setting [15] undertaken by the American Library Association in the early 1980s.

The convergence of this best professional philosophy with federal guidance resulted in dramatic achievements at the local level. While localities were able to implement successful programs, the dilemma almost all libraries faced vis-a-vis literacy was how to provide literacy services when community needs so dictate. Librarians planning literacy programs were quick to realize that in some communities, services may not even conform to a single model. Yet the high level of commitment to community-based efforts, coupled with these other factors, continued to promote the development of library-based literacy services.

This commitment was evident in the passage of the 1979 White House Conference on Library and Information Services resolution on literacy. It called for the expansion of literacy programs at the

community level, identification of effective library adult literacy programs, coordination of library programs with other adult education programs, cooperation among public educational agencies, and joint planning. [16]

This 1979 resolution on literacy is important because it demonstrates that commitment to literacy concerns had become a basic philosophical stance of librarians. Moreover, it is noteworthy because it provided a climate for increased literacy activities in libraries throughout the 1980s. Consensus theory suggests that social order results from a dominant set of shared values. [17] Libraries' commitment to literacy had been growing and gaining strength since the turn of the century.

Bolstered by the profession's articulation of literacy as a fundamental concern for the nation's libraries through the forum of the 1979 White House conference, federal support of library-based literacy efforts increased during the 1980s.

Between FY 1982 and FY 1984, LSCA Title I supported 250 literacy-related projects. The thrust of these projects was to catalyze state efforts focusing on the development of bibliographies, materials, and computer software. For example,

- Ohio's "Project Learn" disseminated a highly selective annotated bibliography of materials evaluated by public librarians, teachers in adult basic education programs, literacy experts, and adult new readers.

- Broward County (Florida) Division of Libraries related the selection of materials for new readers to the culture of the community.

- The public library of Darlington County, South Carolina, developed computer software to support the Laubach literacy program.

- Jacob Edwards Library in Southbridge, Massachusetts, developed computer software for use by the limited-English-speaking. [18]

Other LSCA Title I projects funded through the mid-1980s demonstrated three important types of programming:

- Community literacy, a concept which assumes that education is inseparable from the student's life outside the classroom;

- Technology-oriented programs focusing on interactive use of computers and videodisc technology; and

- One-to-one tutoring models.

Also, to make efficient use of literacy support among agencies, funding under LSCA Title I supported the development of statewide coalitions and literacy councils, including such activities as information and referral, speakers' bureaus, statewide conferences, and hotlines. [19] Programs such as these were identified and codified in the 1985 U.S. Department of Education-supported publication *Effective Adult Literacy Programs: A Practitioner's Guide.*

The 1984 reauthorization of LSCA brought with it an expanded commitment to literacy efforts at the local level. The inclusion of Title VI, Library Literacy Programs, created a discretionary grants program under which state and local libraries could apply

directly to the U.S. Department of Education for funding to initiate, continue, expand, or improve literacy services. For example, the LSCA Title VI annual report of 1989 activities reflects the diversity of literacy needs in communities and states across the nation. [20] Essentially the projects funded employed seven common approaches to library-based literacy programming:

- **Collaboration, cooperation, and coalition-building** to facilitate involvement and coordination of literacy activities with various entities such as public schools, community colleges, social welfare agencies, and individual volunteers.

  Example: Buckley Public Library (Poteau, Oklahoma) served as the headquarters for the community literacy council, involving a number of local government agencies and community groups working together to gain local support and awareness of literacy needs.

- **Public awareness** to inform the public of the availability of literacy services or materials; to recruit students and tutors; or to publicize the effects of illiteracy on the individual and society.

  Example: Napa City-County Library (California) involved adult learners and tutors in taping public service announcements to publicize programs.

- **Training** for volunteers who, in turn, provide instruction to adult new learners.

  Example: The West Virginia Library Commission supported leadership development training to volunteer literacy organizations in counties that did not have access to such workshops.

- **Collection development** to meet the demand for more and better literacy materials suitable for new learners.

  Example: The Charlotte/Mecklenburg County Public Library (North Carolina) provided a collection of adult basic reading materials at its main library and 15 branches. Deposit collections were made available to adult literacy programs as well as to library outreach sites at housing authorities, homeless shelters, and minimum security institutions.

- **Technology-assisted instruction and management** (audiovisual, telecommunications, and computer technologies) to provide alternatives to one-on-one tutorials to improve reading, writing, and computational skills of adult learners and to track learner progress.

  Example: The Russell Public Library (rural Kansas) developed media-based literacy instruction to reach functionally illiterate adults and to stimulate family reading. Television broadcasts of family reading workshops and weekly radio broadcasts of high-interest, low-reading materials also were incorporated into the plan of action.

- **Special instructional components** to promote the development and use of local ideas and materials tailored to specific community needs.

  Example: St. Martin Parish Library (Louisiana) administered reading style diagnostic tests to new students to identify learning styles. The results were used to develop individualized reading strategies, materials, and methods.

- **Employment-oriented** projects to provide workplace or employment-oriented opportunities for literacy instruction.

  Example: The Milwaukee Public Library (Wisconsin) worked with county and city governments to determine literacy needs of government employees and how to incorporate literacy information and referral in their training programs.

These specific examples of LSCA Title VI initiatives demonstrate that public libraries are beginning to meet the diverse needs of their individual communities. As community-based organizations, they are able to provide a convergence of the best national practice tailored to local needs.

Mobilization of the Profession

Committed leadership from professional library associations at national and state levels has provided a synergistic focus for alliance with U.S. Department of Education literacy initiatives. In fact, the 1980s have been characterized as "The Coalition Era." [21] The American Library Association (ALA) spearheaded the founding of the Coalition for Literacy in 1981. (Startup funds for the Coalition were provided by the U.S. Department of Education.)

The Coalition was established to address three primary goals:

- To increase awareness of illiteracy through a national advertising campaign;

- To provide a toll-free contact and referral service; and

- To raise funds for additional public awareness.

The Coalition has been credited with great influence. Through its efforts, over $32 million in air time on television and radio was gained for the literacy cause. [22]

Also of import is the ALA Literacy Assembly, first convened at the Association's 1989 conference, to establish a focal point in the organization to support the goals of national literacy efforts; to honor those who advance literacy through annual awards; and to encourage reading and literacy, through publications of the ALA Public Information Office.

Under the innovative "National Partners for Libraries and Literacy" program, ALA has built partnerships with the corporate world. [23] The Bell Atlantic/ALA Family Literacy Project is an example of such efforts. Building alliances with other community agencies and involving all family members in a library-based family literacy project form the focus of this project which in 1990 awarded grants of $5,000 to 25 libraries to enhance family literacy projects. The projects represent a team approach between the librarian/adult basic education specialist or literacy provider and a community representative from Bell Atlantic. This team approach ensures that a network of service providers is established, that several areas of expertise are represented, and that local community needs are addressed. [24]

The 1990-91 Bell Atlantic/ALA Family Literacy Project grant recipients represented a variety of libraries in the Mid-Atlantic region, including:

- Wilmington Public Library (Delaware), to strengthen an extant Literacy Volunteers of America program;

- Martin Luther King Memorial Library, Anacostia Branch (District of Columbia), to work with local public schools to provide individual and shared learning opportunities for parents and children;

- Southern Maryland Regional Library Association, to extend the "Mommy Read to Me" literacy program; and

- Free Library of Philadelphia, to sponsor a book and film discussion series for adult learners and their families.

Enhancing the scope of library-based literacy programs is a goal of the American Library Association. The Bell Atlantic project is a prototype for libraries to follow in working with corporations to create a more literate America. [25]

Efforts to assess and evaluate the role of literacy efforts in libraries have been included in studies funded by the American Library Association, such as the "Adult Services in the Eighties" project conducted under the aegis of the ALA Reference and Adult Services Division. [26] An examination of the study indicates that in every state, libraries are involved in literacy education programs. [27] The commitment to strengthen library literacy efforts has continued as a top priority of the Association.

Libraries and Lifelong Learning

While this discussion has focused on the role of libraries in support of basic literacy, it should be noted that library services extend and support three of the four stages of literacy development as defined by Lyman: illiteracy, basic literacy, functional literacy, and mature reading. [28]

The second and third stages, basic and functional literacy, are being supported through many of the library-based literacy programs identified above. However, libraries have extended their literacy program offerings through such innovative approaches as Education Information Centers for adults in transition because of job or career changes and family literacy programs aimed at parents and their children. [29]

Mature reading, the fourth stage of literacy, has been supported through a number of collaborative efforts such as those between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and state and national professional associations. Notable among these collaborations was the highly successful "Let's Talk About It" project sponsored by the ALA and funded by NEH in 1983. During the years 1983-87, 30,000 adults in 300 libraries across the nation participated in scholar-led "Let's Talk About It" book discussion groups.

Other NEH/ALA-sponsored projects have followed this success: "Voices and Visions" based on the Public Broadcasting Service series; and currently "Seeds of Change," a traveling exhibition celebrating the 500th anniversary of Columbus' voyages of discovery and "Brave New Worlds," the accompanying reading and discussion program.

Locally sponsored NEH grants illustrating library commitment to the humanities include scholar-led reading and discussion groups on women's autobiographies in South Carolina libraries; and exhibitions, an interpretive catalog, and outreach programs about the American abolitionist movement in Massachusetts at the Boston Athenaeum. [30] Like other NEH projects, these have been designed to increase public understanding of the humanities through the interpretation, discovery, and greater appreciation of books and materials in these collections.

These examples of humanities programming illustrate the library's role in lifelong learning. They are indicative of Monroe's characterization of the functions of the library as they stimulate consideration of public issues in light of humanistic values and provide for the fundamental cultural literacy needed for appreciation of the arts. [31]

Going for the Gold

A silver anniversary quite naturally causes thoughts about the next landmark celebration. What will happen over the next 25 years? The National Education Goals agreed to by President George Bush and the governors in 1989, and AMERICA 2000, the comprehensive plan for the revitalization of American education announced by the President in April of 1991, present a future that will challenge all educators, including librarians. Adult literacy and lifelong learning are important components of these plans if this country is to achieve excellence in education by the year 2000.

At the 1991 White House Conference on Library and Information Services (WHCLIS) held in July, President Bush and Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander both stated that "libraries are the center of the revolution beginning in American schools." [32]

The conference delegates responded to this challenge with 97 resolutions. Several are especially pertinent to this discussion of libraries and adult education:

- Inclusion of libraries as educational institutions for lifelong learning in legislation, regulations and policy statements...to make libraries the center of the revolutionary movement called AMERICA 2000.

- Designation of libraries as educational agencies and inclusion of members of the library community in implementing AMERICA 2000.

- Establishment of literacy for all people as an on-going national priority recognizing the central role of libraries as providers of adult, youth, family, and workplace literacy services.

- Provision of incentives to develop and produce quality literacy materials, develop new technologies, and develop new programs in basic literacy and literacy enhancements.

These recommendations reflect the best thinking about libraries generated at a grassroots level. Literacy and involvement in education is at the top of the national library agenda. This is in keeping with the federal government's recognition that libraries are a pivotal element in strengthening literacy within the family. [33]

There are many examples of ways in which librarians and adult education professionals can combine forces to reach the AMERICA 2000 goal of a literate America. First among these is the coordination of efforts among literacy providers while still maintaining a diverse provider network. David Rosen, of the Massachusetts Committee on Adult Education, underscored this need for diversity:

> We have a better adult education services system when we have a diversity of service providers. Not only can local education agencies and corrections institutions, but also community-based organizations, community colleges, libraries, companies and unions, and volunteer organizations make up our provider network. [34]

In partnership, librarians and adult education professionals can meet the diverse needs of the nation's new readers. Recognition of the fact that different community needs will mandate different literacy services by a variety of providers is a challenge that can be met by creative and innovative individuals from both professions. Through collaborative efforts, the goal of national literacy can become a reality.

The importance of the public library to this effort was simply but elegantly expressed by First Lady Barbara Bush in the opening ceremony of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services on July 10, 1991:

> Libraries are really one of the greatest gifts that the American people have ever given themselves. They're a gift for all of us--no restrictions of age or gender or class or interest. [35]

As the silver anniversary of the Adult Education Act is observed, Mrs. Bush's pronouncement reminds educators and librarians alike that the public library is an invaluable resource in adult education. It is an institution open to all individuals, offering hope and assistance whatever the educational needs might be.

Public libraries have long been associated with adult literacy and lifelong learning. Over the years they have made important contributions in these areas. If the past is any indication, public libraries will play an invaluable role in achieving the National Education Goal for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning.

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5. Helen Lyman, *Reading and the Adult New Reader* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1976).

6. Helen Lyman, *Literacy and the Nation's Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1977).

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11. Anne J. Mathews, Adrienne Chute, and Carol A. Cameron, "Meeting the Literacy Challenge: A Federal Perspective," *Library Trends* 35 (Fall 1986), 221-23.

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13. Ibid., 3.

14. Ibid., 135.

15. Charles R. McClure, et al, *Planning and Role Setting for Public Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1987).

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17. David S. Barrows and Sandra Morris, "Managing Public Policy Issues," *Long Range Planning* 22 (December 1989), 66.

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25. Ibid., 37.

26. Kathleen M. Heim and Danny P. Wallace, *Adult Services: An Enduring Focus for Public Libraries* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1990); Kathleen M. Heim, *Adult Services in the Eighties: Final Report* (unpublished paper, May 1990).

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28. Monroe, "Evolution of Literacy Programs," op. cit., 201.

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