

The housing of the bureau and catalogues, though not a very considerable matter, would require to be considered in advance, as even large libraries do not often have to spare the room or two that would be necessary for this purpose. The stack for the district book collection is not likely to cause difficulty. It should be a simple repository, inexpensively shelved, large enough to accommodate the initial stock of, say, 10,000 volumes.

Miss A. S. Cooke, in her *County Libraries Manual* (1935), says,—

“There is little doubt that at least in the larger counties, the most active and useful county library will be that which has the smallest possible reserve of books at headquarters and the greatest proportion distributed to branches and centres.”

Although most of the books for the first few years would be permanently on duty amongst the centres, the stock would be increasing each year, and must be housed. The stack would, of course, be used only by the district staff, and there is no reason why the same room should not be both stack and work room. Many travelling library depots find it convenient to make up the boxes in close proximity to the books on the shelves.

DISTRICT BOOK-STOCK.

The lending-stock of the district libraries should be a good collection of general literature, with a carefully controlled ingredient of fiction—in fact, all the classes of books that should be found in a good municipal library. Statistics in Great Britain show that the proportion of the book-stock which consists of fiction varies from 47·2 per cent. in Middlesex to 67·7 per cent. in Durham. Care is taken to control the proportion of fiction books sent out to the centres, but it must be remembered that the district library system is essentially of a recreative nature; that many adults in such areas would not read at all if they were not attracted by fiction; and that by interspersing fiction with serious literature the quality of the reading is gradually improved.

In the composition of the county library stock in British libraries the following are the average percentages of the various classes of literature: General works, 0·3 per cent.; philosophy, 0·5 per cent.; religion, 0·9 per cent.; sociology, 2·9 per cent.; philology, 0·2 per cent.; natural science, 2·8 per cent.; useful arts, 3·4 per cent.; fine arts, 2·3 per cent.; literature, 4·7 per cent.; history, 10·3 per cent.; fiction, 55·6 per cent.; juvenile, 15·9 per cent.

The standard number of books per 100 of population in the British county libraries is thirty, and most of the libraries have now reached that level.

The district library bureau should select and purchase all books, catalogue and prepare them for use, and send them out to the local centres. It should also be responsible for such rebinding and replacement as may be necessary.

The duty of the district does not stop here. It has a more serious class of reader whose needs are discussed under the heading of “Interlending.”

MACHINERY OF BOOK SERVICE.

The district stock being provided, the next step is to make it available for readers in every part of the district. It is the essence of the system that, instead of small collections of books being formed for preservation in a locality, there should be a continuous fresh stream of books, much more in number than the localities could possibly acquire, coming regularly within the reach of local readers. The books remain the property of the district as a whole, but the complete collection is at the service of each locality, reaching them in regular consignments, which are changed as soon as the freshness has worn off.

Units or centres can be formed wherever there is a group of persons anxious to receive books. Householders, school committees, libraries, church societies, branches of the Farmers Union, the W.E.A., women's institutes, or small study groups can apply to have books sent to their locality (with the strict provision that such books must be available equally to members and non-members). The only requisite is the existence of a small group interested in books and of some building—*e.g.*, a school, a church, or even a store—which can do duty as the local station, and some individual chosen to be responsible for receiving and returning the books. The success of the system depends very largely on the interest and enthusiasm of these unpaid workers.

An existing library, especially in villages and small towns which are unable to find sufficient money each year for a reasonable purchase of new books, may act as a borrowing-unit. Any existing library in such a position, participating in the district scheme, would give its readers a better service of books than they could possibly obtain out of their own resources.

In England and Scotland, and to a less extent in the United States, the small local units are usually located in schools; and no doubt in New Zealand the small country school, as the accepted rendezvous of the district, would generally be selected. In most cases the teacher acts as librarian, and both in Great Britain and the United States teachers so acting are encouraged to attend annual conferences with the county librarians. There is one sensible drawback to the use of schools, which has been remarked in Great Britain. The location of the local unit in the village school is apt to give the impression that the books are purely for the use of the children or the parents of the children, whereas it is the essence of the scheme that they should be equally free to all.

Consignments of books from the district bureau to the local centres or units should vary in number from 50 to 200 volumes, according to the population and the resources of the district. The British county system aims at a minimum of 100 books in all local centres,