

LAWRENCE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Lawrence, Kansas

Report To The Board Of Directors For 1968

To The Board Of Directors:

No doubt the most significant public service achievement for 1968 was the creation, for the first time in the history of the library, of an adequate staff to serve the reference information needs of the community. By the end of 1967 we had, as in the past, one person performing this function. By July of 1968 we had added a full-time reference supervisor, Mrs. Mary Murphy. By the latter part of 1968 a full-time assistant had been hired in addition to the two already mentioned, bringing the Reference section to three full-time persons. This, of course, was made possible by our serving as reference and interlibrary loan center for Northeast Kansas Library System. Beginning in 1969, contractual funds from the system will go toward paying the costs of the reference personnel and in addition will provide funds for additional books. Under normal circumstances the library would not for years been able to afford a fully-manned reference staff during the 63 hours it is open each week. However, by utilizing that staff to serve the needs of local patrons and serving as a backup service to out-of-town libraries at the same time, all parties involved are able to get the most effective use of professional advisory services. During the year 1968, our reference staff provided answers to 3,472 reference questions and in addition handled 7,740 requests for interlibrary loans from system libraries. Over 600 requests for materials for Lawrence patrons were sent onto the KIC circuit during the year. In addition to funds received for salaries during 1968, over \$8,600 worth of reference materials were placed in the collection due to Lawrence Library's role as reference center for the System.

As a sidelight to the above service, an interesting project has been carried on between Lawrence and Johnson County for approximately one year now. This consists of exchanging lists of books which each library has on reserve for its patrons. Thus during the year Lawrence was able to find some 537 additional books for its patrons much sooner than the normal time of 2 to 4 weeks waiting for a book to come back from circulation. This exchange also saw Lawrence providing 483 books to Johnson County in the exchange program.

From its beginnings as pilot project in 1966, the Northeast Kansas Libraries System had been under the administrative direction of the Lawrence Public Library. The Lawrence Librarian had acted as Administrative Librarian for the project. With NEKL's official designation as a legal entity last year, Lawrence ceased to function in this role, and, as a consequence, Wayne Mayo resigned as Administrative Librarian for the System effective July 1. Lawrence remains a system member and in addition serves as reference and resource center for the system.

Library circulation took a sharp drop in 1968. The 281,416 books circulated represented a decrease of 17,783 books over the previous year. A breakdown of books circulated indicates an actual decrease of 20,148 children's books and an increase of 2,365 adult books. Of the decrease in children's books, approximately 7,000 of these can be attributed to the discontinuance of counting a 30 day teacher loan as two circulations. This was a carryover from a time when books circulated for two weeks in normal non-school transactions. Thus, each school loan was counted twice.

Now, with each regular loan going out for a variable period of 3-4 weeks, it was felt best to count each teacher loan only once. Thus, the paper loss of 7,000 to 8,000 books. Some 12,896 teacher loans were made in 1968, as contrasted to approximately 20,000 in the past with double counting.

In addition to the 7,000 or so loss in school loans, the Children's Dept. circulated some 12,000 less regular loans than the previous year. Without question, the growth of school libraries in the elementary schools is having an effect, as it has for the past several years. This, combined with the almost total lack of seating space in the Children's Dept. cannot help but have its adverse effect. The long-range situation, though, is optimistic. As school libraries stress outside reading for study and enjoyment, it will soon be recognized that the public library is the one source of the widest variety of materials in the community. Thus, the growth of school libraries is in reality an ally of public library use. Reading and libraries are now recognized as important in the elementary schools. This can only have a beneficial effect on public libraries in the future. In addition, a new public library will encourage those who now hesitate to come in due to the crowded conditions and lack of adequate seating, not only in the children's Dept. but in all areas of the library. Who can deny the feeling of claustrophobia one receives after spending over 10 minutes in any part of the building? An interesting sidelight is that this is the first year since 1957 that circulation of adult books has exceeded that of children's materials. The gap between the two services has been narrowing since 1961 and is a further indication of the increase in adult use of libraries at a faster pace than children's. This would appear to be a widespread situation around the country.

A slight increase in registered borrowers was seen for 1968. A net increase of 163 patrons was recorded. County cards dropped from 151 to 33. A technicality was the reason for the decrease. As members of NEKL, we agreed to serve outside borrowers without charge, beginning January, 1969. Thus, early in 1968, we began dating out-of-town cards to expire as of Dec. 31, and progressively decreased the charges. We actually ceased charging as of Dec. 1, 1968. Thus, some 33 non-resident borrowers became users during the last month of 1968, while all of the others were dropped from the count as of the end of the year.

Little needs to be said here about the critical space needs. We should point out only that in 1968 some additional 12 sections of children's shelving and 21 sections of adult shelving were added to house new books. In 1969, 11 sections of children's shelving and 27 sections of adult shelving will be added for acquisitions for that year. In providing this shelving we have lost some 10 badly needed seats for patrons. After 1969, we will have no recourse but to begin storage of books. We have virtually no room for additional shelving nor will the building support the additional weight. Space problems have been so critical that in 1968 we were forced to turn down two offers of free placement of 16 mm films for community use. One was from the Canadian Travel Bureau and the other from SW Bell Telephone Co. Such films could be great use to the community if available from a central source. This, and other programs must wait, however, until adequate space is available.

Special services of the Children's Dept. under Mrs. Halfen continued to be popular. 1,868 children joined the Summer Reading Program while the bookmobile and storyteller made weekly trips to recreation spots to encourage reading. Preschool story hours in the Fall and Spring saw 952 children attending the 19 sessions or an average of 50 children at each session. In addition to the above, numerous school classes visited the library during the school year.

Although we purchased more books than ever in 1968 (6,743) we withdrew 4,826 as well. The large withdrawal is a result of a final count of an inventory taken in the latter part of 1967. Final checking in June, 1968 resulted in 831 children's books missing and 1,823 adult books missing, a total of 2,654 items. These were listed as withdrawn and removed from our catalog. Unfortunately, we have no record of previous inventories and thus cannot make comparisons as to average losses per year from theft.

An important benefit for employees provided by the Board in 1968 was the employer-paid hospitalization for employees with three months or more of service. Coverage is provided under Blue-Cross. Coverage of dependents is optional and the cost is borne by the employee.

John Peters, Chairman of the Board, left after eight years service. Dr. James Drury was appointed to the Board for a four year term on May 1. Mrs. Crews was re-elected Secretary-Treasurer at the annual meeting in February. At the May meeting, Vice-chairman Max Stalcup was elected chairman and Mrs. Ulmer elected vice-chairman. Continuing services for the year 1968 included service to the homebound, in which we delivered some 5,000 books to patrons; a continuing collection of children's books loaned to Ballard Center; circulation of paperback books; 8 mm films (982 were circulated in 1968); monthly art displays sponsored by the Lawrence Art Guild; and xeroxing for patrons. 18,473 xerox copies were purchased by library users last year.

With the possibility of a new library facility in the offing, it would appear that many of our space problems may be solved in the next several years. A spacious, inviting library will also bring about a dramatic change in library use. In addition to increased general use of the library, we can expect more and varied community services of all kinds to be initiated, not only by the library staff but by civic groups as well.

In closing, our appreciation, in addition to the persons already mentioned, goes to all of our staff who have done so much to provide service under less than ideal conditions. In particular to Mrs. Osma, who is largely responsible for the excellent collection built up over the 15 years she has been with the library; to Mrs. Weeks, who not only keeps our accounts in fine order, but performs 1,001 other tasks daily in connection with all departments of the library; to Mrs. Meyer, whose circulation staff handles some 600,000 transactions each year and does an excellent public relations job in the process; finally, James Anthony, who as custodian does a remarkable job of keeping the building presentable in spite of the limitations presented by the building itself.

Wayne Mayo
Head Librarian