

Chapter 7

Conclusions

based

on

preceding

chapters

The prevalence of libraries would indicate a quite general approval of them.

These sixty, in all parts of the State, ranging in age from a few months to twenty-six years, founded in almost as many ways, in communities differing widely in character and resources, may be taken as fair types of the moderately large libraries of the State. Geographically considered, most of them are located in the northern one-fourth of the State; this may be ascribed, in part, to the fact that the early settlers of the northern counties were more often from the New England or other Eastern states, while the southern counties drew their population from Virginia, Kentucky, and the south in general. Then too, manufacturing industries are more numerous, and the colleges of Chicago have had some influence in the matter. Forty counties are represented, thirty-three being north of Springfield; there are, of course many other libraries in the State, large ones too in counties not included in the forty (see map for list of counties) but these, as typical libraries founded in towns of moderate size, seemed best suited to the purpose of the inquiry.

Some are in cities, others in post-villages; twenty-six are in county seats. Their incomes range from less than \$200 to almost \$3000 a year. They contain from 300 to 10000 volumes, the latter number being taken as a limit to prevent an unwieldy extension of the list

They have been founded by associations, by the public directly, by private gifts, or by institutions. Twenty-two owe their

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existence in some measure to earlier libraries, begun by associations, clubs, stock or shareholders. The library would grow, become popular, funds would be lacking, and it would become evident that the people who needed the books most were not able to use them freely; money would become harder to obtain, by subscription, gift, or the sale of more shares. Then the chief supporters of the library would petition for the establishment, or permission to vote on the establishment of a free public library, offering the existing library comprising sometimes as in Polo, building, fittings and books, as a basis for the new institution. With a proper amount of agitation and the best efforts of all interested, this usually convinced the council or voters, as the case might be, though in one instance a threat to close the library had to be employed to convince a council. The library would then be promptly reorganized as a public one; this was the plan in Barry, Mendota, Onarga, Pekin, and Woodstock.

Sometimes a reading room was the entering wedge, and the association was short-lived; this was the case in Cordova and Urbana. Two libraries, in Kansas and Warren were founded to aid schools, while Earlville was given the public school library. Women's clubs virtually founded the libraries in Hoopston, Sycamore, Tuscola, and Waukegan, since but for their energetic work the libraries would not have been possible, even with the tax. The study clubs and University extension courses have roused a new interest in books and reading everywhere they have entered.



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The libraries founded by tax voted by a spontaneous public impulse are not many. The libraries at Carthage, Dixon, Havana, Moline, and Savanna are the best examples of this; Carthage and Savanna received gifts of books however, which did good service, while each of the others benefited by a subscription paper till the tax was available. Sometimes the Board borrows money to be repaid without interest at a certain time; the supposition is that when the time comes the lenders will often refuse to receive the money again.

The libraries founded by individuals are usually memorials, or in the nature of a monument to the founders; in either case, the giver imposes conditions, sometimes peculiar, on the recipient; generally a stipulation that the library is to be maintained as a free public library is made. The libraries in Dundee, Naperville, Ottawa, Rockton, and Wheaton are of this class. In Ottawa and in Wheaton the library has an endowment and rarely, if ever, receives public money; in Naperville and Rockton there is no endowment, and in Monticello the expense is shared by the founder and the township. The library of Elkhart is a reward for the exclusion of saloons from the town for three consecutive years. The library in Lombard, belonging to the church but free to all, has seemingly solved the problem for that village.

Most of the libraries investigated are under the provisions of the law concerning cities and incorporated towns; that in Winnetka, formerly village, is now a township library.

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There are eleven distinctly township libraries; the small number may be due to the situation of the town or village in a corner of the township, for instance, or to some of the causes mentioned in the chapter on township libraries. All but three were preceded by associations or similar bodies which gave their property wholly or in part to the public libraries. That in Monticello was the gift of one individual, the people of Geneva were started to thinking by a very live Improvement Association, but Kewanee has no record of such assistance.

After a library has proved to be a success, as one report says, "everybody was always in favor of it". No general rule for success can be made; the local conditions must be studied and plans arranged to take advantage of these conditions, if the library is to be more than a safety-deposit vault for storing and "saving" books. When the library has been fairly started, a careful, tactful administration makes success sure, usually.

If the most successful types in the six groups should be designated the list would read about as follows:

- Chapter 1, Lombard, and Winnetka;
- " 2, Carthage, Geneva, Polo;
- " 3, Belvidere, Pontiac, Sycamore, Tuscola;
- " 4, Dixon, Galena, Waukegan;
- " 5, Lincoln, Kankakee, Ottawa;
- " 6, Batavia, Geneva, and Polo.

No plan can be warranted for every locality.

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The public interest in libraries has increased so much in the past ten years , that the prospect is hopeful for a number of new libraries. But the gift outright of a library complete with a permanent endowment, to be aided by tax at the will of the people, is not yet in the reach of all communities nor are they all ready for it.

Therefore, for the average town having from 1000 to 4000`pee people ( this would include thirty-five of the sixty, being all in Chapters 2 and 3 ) some one of the following suggestive plans, adapted to local needs , would prove satisfactory, if followed up by tact in administration and a judicious use of advertising.

a An individual might offer to the town or township, according to existing conditions, a suitable building fitted for use, with ground, on condition that the people in a certain time , install and provide for the maintenance of a free public library therein. Subscriptions, a loan, or a book-party, or all three could be used to start the library and arrange for it till the tax could be had. This plan has been tried in Canton, Rockton, and other places; in Lincoln the donor was the Library Association; in Monticello the township furnished building , librarian, and running expenses, the individual the books with money to buy more; any club, association, or existing non-public library could be the donor. The conditions unless in exceptional cases, imposed on the receiver should not exceed three: acceptance, proper maintenance, use to be free to all; in some cases the donor desires his name



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to be given to the library, and this is allowable; if rare books, special collections, or curios are added to the gift, provision should be made for their proper care and display. The plan seems to answer equally well in towns and townships; some must see to the vote at the election with zeal, if the voters have to approve of it at a general election. In Galena Mr. Felt supported the library for two years before its acceptance; in Elkhart, the library is to revert to the giver's legal heirs in two years after her death, if the town has made no provision for its maintenance.

b In the case of libraries founded by tax with little or no aid from individuals, in incorporated towns the presentation of a petition to the council signed by the heaviest tax-payers and others interested, is sufficient; in townships, the petition is the preliminary to a vote on the question by the township. This method was used in Danville, Dixon, Havana, and Moline; in Danville some books were given also; in Dixon, open shelves are a great attraction; they had only the tax. In Moline a dinner was given and subscriptions asked for to help out the tax, payable one-third in two months, one-third in one year and one-third in two years; \$5600 was raised; in Havana a canvass of the town brought \$1400 and 250 books, which with the tax which had been voted for two previous years, made a secure foundation. In Macomb, Pontiac, and Toulon the tax seems to have been all that was used.

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c For small towns where there is an academy, cooperation as in Kansas and Warren with the village or township, is feasible, and the usefulness of the small sum that could be raised by taxation would be multiplied; in Earlville the school library was turned over to the public library; no instance of such cooperation with a public school has been found. Some report the school library as being public, but the funds do not as a rule enable the school library to be attractive to the person who reads for amusement rather than instruction. An arrangement must be made with the school however that will keep the library open at least one day in every week, throughout the year.

d Nine of the sixty libraries were founded in villages, having less than 1000 inhabitants; five of these were gifts, and two others received considerable aid in addition to the tax. The one at Lombard is the property of the church; those at Toulon and Winnetka appear to have had only the tax.

When a single wealthy giver is not at hand several might be persuaded to join forces, and if necessary, the name might omit or include all of them; where this is impossible, a church forms a good center if sectarian feeling is firmly repressed.

Mr. Woolsey of Polo, speaking from experience says, "A few energetic men and women pulling together can build a library in any town". Let us hope that the day will soon come when the library will be as indispensable as the school-house, when every town will have a well-chosen, heartily supported library, presenting



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to visitors the sight of open shelves , standard reference books freely used and understood, a goodly number of the best periodicals, and special provision of all for children.

Active agitation , frequent advertising, and an efficient librarian will make the final success of the library , certain under almost any conditions, however adverse they may seem.

If this paper shall be the means of helping one community to overcome the obstacles in its advance toward such a library, the writer will be well satisfied.

The end.

Approved  
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Director of Library School

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