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# Public Libraries and Adult Education: An Historical Review[1]

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The growth of adult education has created greater needs for learning opportunities in rural areas. The public library is often considered a community learning center with the ability to effectively respond to these needs. This review leads to the conclusion that, in the absence of outside funding, the potential for adult education as a central function of the public library is limited.

There is little argument that adult education is a growing trend in the United States. However, in rural areas which do not have the amenities found in urban and suburban communities—a nagging question has to do with where and how one may receive adult education opportunities. The public library is often thought of as a community learning center which holds great promise for meeting learning needs of adults. This paper examines the literature on public libraries and adult education and considers the proposition that the public library is indeed central to meeting adult education tasks. As the literature on rural libraries and adult education is sparse, we begin with a more general review. The review is divided into three time periods 1833–1920, 1920–56, and 1956–present.

## *1833–1920*

The first libraries in this country date back to colonial times. In 1673 Robert Keane donated his book collection to the Boston Townhouse to which there was some public access. Several Maryland parishes had collections at that time, though their use was primarily for the clergy. Benjamin Franklin, a pioneer in many foundations of American life, helped establish a Library Association of Philadelphia; this was a subscription library—a voluntary association of individuals who made contributions for the purchase of books [21].

By the early 1800's a native literacy movement was developing and there was evidence of great expansion in reading and writing. While there was a growing number of private or subscription libraries, the first public library supported by a municipal tax was established in Peterborough, New Hampshire, in 1833. The most famous early institution—the Boston Public Library—was established in 1852, followed shortly by the New York Public Library and others.

> It was characteristic of the early public libraries that they were largely urban and founded under the stimulus of philanthropy. [21, p.20]

In these early days adult education was seen as a major function of the public library. Robert Lee's history of adult education and the public library is a generally acknowledged definitive work and he wrote that

> The public library was the first tax supported agency established in the United States for the informal education of adults. It was organized specifically to provide a means by which mature individuals could continue to learn through their own efforts. [23, p.1]

Lee went on to propose several reasons which help explain the emergence of the public library. The first half of the nineteenth century was a time when large social forces worked in the shaping of what was to be American culture. There was wide belief in an unlimited capacity and natural right to knowledge. The granting of male suffrage fostered expression in political activity. However, a fundamental tenet of democracy's vitality is an enlightened citizenry—thereby creating a new need for a continual source of information as a basis for informed collective judgment on public issues. The steady growth in public schools resulted in increasing number of literate adults and a consequent thirst for additional knowledge and information. In addition, the lyceum movement of the 1830's, which preceded the later extension and Chautauqua developments, gave further expression to the need for and interest in adult learning. Finally, in light of the many social problems such as crime, alcoholism and gambling fostered by the growing industrial revolution, many leading citizens saw the public library as a "potent enemy of crime and a continuing means of moral elevation for the working adult" [23, p. 3], a condition vital to the successful development of a democratic republic. That the public library, like the public school, would form the basis for a viable republic with learning as its cornerstone was evidenced in this reasoning attributed to the trustees of the Boston Public Library

> 1. The building and maintenance of a free nation rested on the wisdom of the people who controlled it;

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> 2. The nation placed on its electorate an increasing responsibility but had no comprehensive policy for educating people beyond common school requirement; 3. A nation which granted freedom of choice must therefore provide a means of continuing education which would insure that the choices would be intelligent. [23, p.8]

By 1875 there were 188 public libraries in 11 states and their development followed a geographic pattern similar to those of the public schools.

Lee and others [5; 23; 26] concur that in spite of these noble aspirations for an "educated public" the early days of public libraries were not marked by openness to a wide public. The early librarians were scholars who seemed to hold an attitude of keeping the public away as much as possible and the books as little worn by use as feasible.

> The fulfillment of the librarians duty, therefore, consisted of accumulating significant books, establishing policies to insure their safety and opening the library's doors to all adults who wished to consult the books. [23, p.12]

The early image of the public library was one where the institution was located in an urban area, seen as a supplement to the public school, to which access and use were limited due to strict role interpretations by scholar librarians not disposed to widespread public access.

As the country changed over the last forty years of the 19th century, so too did the public library and its education function. The American Library Association (ALA) was formed at an 1876 gathering of librarians. At this meeting, and for the next twenty years, three issues provided the focus for discussion—the educational responsibility of the library, the desirability of popular novels in the collection, and the necessity of more efficient internal organization. The comments of library leaders in the last quarter of the century with respect to adult education reflected some major shifts from earlier values and are well captured in the summary, "the educational objective of the public library is to provide the means by which adults—especially those forced to leave school to earn a living—can continue their education" [23, p. 17]. The internal system during this period was considerably advanced by the development and introduction of the Dewey Decimal Classification System. Library use grew considerably and was fostered by the growth in compulsory school laws, that brought a wider level of educational attainment and improvements in printing techniques. Concurrently there were increases in sizes of library collections. By the end of the century a conscious community-orientation had made its way into the library framework of operations. Among newly defined objectives and roles were the addition of three new services—personal assistance to readers, recreational reading, and information reference services.

By 1890 state and regional library associations had been formed and played an integral role in promoting library extension in rural areas, professional attitudes and standards. Perhaps the most significant stimulus to the growth and development of the public library during this period was the munificence of Andrew Carnegie—a native of Scotland who made his fortune in this country's burgeoning iron and steel industry. Between 1881 and 1917 Carnegie donated in excess of forty one million dollars for 1679 libraries in 1408 locations. The primary condition for a Carnegie donation was that the local community guarantee 10 percent of the cost annually for upkeep. The Carnegie Library with its grey stone exterior became (and still is) a common institutional landmark in communities across the nation. While exhibiting a uniformity of style, there was not always uniformity of thought with respect to the library's role, and the eye of the storm around the turn of the century centered on the appropriateness of novels in the collection. This gave rise to a long-lasting debate, one side proposing the library was a center for education, the other (that in favor of novels) that it was a recreational one. The educational activities were marginal and without much planned coordination. By 1920 recreation headed the list of library functions followed in order by information and education activities [22]. Much of this development may be explained by the growth in the numbers of libraries and a desire on the part of librarians to put their best foot forward while being responsive to public demands and wishes. In turn this resulted in "the great preponderance of light fiction that characterizes the library collections of many small libraries today. In an effort to serve the entire community, they attempted to be all things to all men. The ultimate consequence was a general confusion of library aims" [23, p. 42].

*1920–1956*

The decade between 1920 and 1930 marks the formal birth of adult education as a professionally recognized concept in the United States. In 1924, Frederick Keppel, the President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, called a meeting of education agencies, the result of which was the formation of the American Association of Adult Education (AAAE). In the same year William Learned published his seminal work, *The American Public Library and the Diffusion of Knowledge.* This work, a study of adult education practices in public libraries, had been funded by the Carnegie Corporation. Learned proposed that the library go far beyond its present role of providing books and reference services; his forward thinking vision called for a library as the source of a community intelligence center that would be the major information and intellectual resource available to the community—"a genuine community university bringing intelligence systematically and persuasively to bear on all adult affairs" [22, p. 56]. The work was widely discussed and debated and was a catalyst for a major commission which emerged from the 1924 meeting. The Commission on the Library and Adult Education was appointed by the ALA, funded by the Carnegie Corporation, and charged with investigating the future role of the library in adult education. In 1926 they published their report with three major recommendations

> 1. The library owes consulting and library service supplemented by suitable books, to those who wish to

> study alone or in groups. Such a service, which can function effectively only through a specially trained and well educated personnel, will offer advice in the choice of books, and will assist students through the preparation of reading courses adapted to their age, education, taste and previous experience.
>
> 2. There is an obligation to furnish complete and reliable information concerning local opportunities for adult education outside the library.
>
> 3. The library should recognize as a fundamental duty, the supplying of books and other printed materials for adult education activities maintained by other organizations. [7, p. 9]

These recommendations with their emphasis on a passive individualized supportive role for the library's adult education function set the pattern and tone for activities during the following 15 years. The Reader's Advisory Service was the primary and most sustained outcome of the commission's recommendations. The Service was widely adopted in larger libraries throughout the nation.

Many additional adult education activities, often funded by the Carnegie Corporation, took place during the 1920's and 1930's. Literacy programs for new immigrants were common; a permanent Board on Library Adult Education was established and published a regular newsletter on adult education activities; discussion groups on contemporary topics were regular events.

These activities did not proceed without vigorous debate within the profession as to their appropriateness, in what was described as a climate of criticism [26]. Lee and others [23] suggested a fivefold framework into which the educational role of the librarian falls depending on one's perspective:

1. To collect, preserve and circulate books.
2. To make books readily accessible.
3. To cooperate with and to supplement the work of other educational agencies.
4. To provide the type of educational service that the library is best qualified to offer.
5. To become the major agency of adult education.

It is clear from the literature that much of the public library's educational activity in this era was heavily supported by outside grants and funding—notably the Carnegie group—and when these funds expired so too did many of the educational programs. The first three categories above were usually the source of general agreement—and the last two the genesis of often contentious debate. John Dana, a widely respected librarian leader, fueled the fires of this early debate with his assertion that

> to do what the shibboleth "Adult Education," as we are now interpreting it, asks us to do, that is to act as guides and teachers to all adults we can persuade to come and ask us what they should read, and how, and to quiz them on their progress and advise them from day to day, all that is quite impossible. Librarians have not now and never will have the income which will suffice to do it. [11, p. 945]

On the other side a number of major library leaders made repeated efforts to install adult education as a central library function [6; 19; 30]. The first history of adult education urged that libraries go far beyond the book service function [4]. However, when John Chancellor retired from his ALA Adult Education post in 1942 he expressed great disappointment at the relative meagerness of the results of their efforts over the previous years [15]. A major review article on adult education activities in public libraries suggested that librarians are generally a conservative lot, and that many of these proposals were simply too controversial [32]. A more recent writer noted that

> these perceptive rationales for more active more expanded adult education services were not, unfortunately, accompanied by substantial plans for coherent library plans which would fulfill the recognized potential for service excellence. [5, p. 54]

The emphasis in the adult education work of the public libraries to this time (1940) had been largely focused on individuals—primarily through the Reader's Advisory Service. The Second World War was to bring profound changes to this work, and in the aftermath of the War the emphasis took a substantial shift to group activities. The years immediately following the war were ones in which the United States played a large international role in the rehabilitation of nations ravaged by war, creating much more interest in and awareness of the world at large among the American public. While communism was on the rise in the eastern bloc countries, a significant emphasis in the United States was placed on promotion of enlightened citizenship and a greater understanding of democratic ideals. The decade after the War was to see several notable programs in addition to some pioneering research efforts addressing adult education in the public library.

In 1945, Mortimer Adler, Cyril Houle and Lowell Martin organized the Great Books Program under the general sponsorship of the Chicago Public Library [12]. This program was designed to facilitate group discussion of classic literature with the objectives of providing "participants with training in effective modes of communication (reading, speaking, listening) and to stimulate learning from the past, resulting in greater awareness of and sensitivity to fundamental problems of human existence" [5, p. 76]. The program, which attracted heterogenous groups of adults, was very successful in Chicago and in the following three years similar programs were developed in seventeen cities nationwide. The American Library Association spawned two projects to provide divergent views on issues of local regional and national importance. The Great Issues program was organized in 1948 for the purpose of stimulating reading and discussion on such issues as inflation, work, government, management-labor relations, the United States and Russia, and civil rights [2]. In 1951, the ALA American Heritage Project—funded by the Ford Foundation Fund for Adult Education (FAE) was launched for the purpose of establishing community discussion groups In the following years, over 28,000 adults participated in 1474 groups nationwide discussing current issues and problems related to the fundamental documents and concepts upon which the United States was developed [5]. During the 1950's the Fund for

Adult Education contributed a million and a half dollars to library adult education projects. The Fund was established after the war by the Ford Foundation with the following objectives

1. To contribute to the establishment of peace;
2. To strengthen democracy;
3. To strengthen the economy;
4. To strengthen, improve and expand education; and
5. To increase knowledge of individual behavior and human relations [34, p. 9]

The Fund's overall goal was to advance the idea and the practice of continuing liberal education by the people of the United States. Munroe [26] pointed out that two aspects of Fund activities had improvement influences on librarians' concepts of adult education. With continuing FAE support closer links developed between librarians and adult educators, the role of the public libraries in adult education gained wider professional acceptance, and the term adult education and its objectives were more widely accepted by librarians. Secondly, the FAE emphasis on small group discussions helped establish this technique as a central part of adult education activities, a significant shift from the earlier pre-war emphasis on the individual. As we shall see, however, this does not assume the centrality of the adult education activity in the overall public library function.

One of the first postwar library research efforts focused on staff training for adult education [14]. Librarians in this study indicated considerable reluctance to redirect their efforts in group activities—compared with the individual treatment with which they were both familiar and comfortable. As inferred earlier, a major problem was the lack of a uniform definition and set of objectives and criteria for training for the adult education function. A second study commissioned in 1948 by the ALA found, with respect to adult education and the public library, consistent trends reflecting greater use by young people than older people, users had better education than nonusers, and more women than men were involved. The profession became embroiled in a considerable debate, not so much at the results, but at the recommendation of the Dean of the University of Chicago Library School, that the focus of adult education efforts should be directed to this select group of users and that the public library should not try and be all things to all people.

> To many librarians, Berelson (the Dean) had propounded a heresy, contradicting all that public libraries represented, which suggested a negation of the fundamental premise that libraries should be prepared and willing to serve the entire community. [5, p. 90]

Helen Smith, in 1953, directed the first nationwide survey of adult education in the public library. In developing a definition she proposed that a library was assumed to be doing adult education if it planned, directed, or participated in one or more of six service categories: Supplying, Planning, Advising and Counseling, Training, Informing, and Doing. The results of this seminal work, while yielding a wealth of data, must have been a disappointment to the proponents of adult education. Only 7.6 percent (n = 128) of the respondents reported doing a "great deal," 47 percent were doing a "medium amount" and 45 percent were doing "a little." Smith recognized the opposing strong opinions. On the one hand public libraries should concentrate on adult education to already existing groups in community services, and supplying, planning, advising, and informing should be emphasized exclusively. On the other hand it was felt that if the public library were to survive, responsibility must be assumed for active programs of their own which would demonstrate the library's unique role in the field. Smith professed that her purpose was not to solve this debate, but cited the urgent and primary needs to

> 1. Formulate a philosophy of library adult education which will establish standards for guidance to determine and clarify functions and objectives toward which the efforts of the profession as a whole may be directed.
>
> 2. To do what is necessary to put principles and philosophy into effect. [31, p. 66]

And she concluded

> The libraries of this country were among the few nonpartisan truly democratic free public institutions which can accept the role of informing our citizens. What is accomplished is limited only by the vision and willingness of librarians to devote themselves to the task. [31, p. 67]

A conference at Allerton Park in 1954 was inspired in part by all of these works and drew leaders from libraries, universities, and adult education. The conference drew up a long list of desirable attitudes for adult education work in libraries which accentuated such traits as positive attitudes, faith in adult learning abilities, belief in democratic processes, and willingness to be a resource. Recommendations for training—both in school and in-service—were offered [3].

Adding to the knowledge base for an effective librarian role in adult education was an indepth case study of five libraries conducted by Eleanor Phinney in 1955. Phinney sought to identify the basic ingredients necessary for a viable adult education program and concluded that there were four:

1. Conviction on the part of the chief librarian of the importance of adult education.
2. Sharing of the staff and board in this conviction to some degree.
3. Popular support of the library by its community, to the point where programs initiated arouse no opposition and readily gain a group of adherents.
4. An adult education program which grows out of community conditions, library capacities, staff interests and capabilities. [29, p. 147]

As the fifties drew to a close it was possible to look back on a postwar period in which a major shift from individual to group orientation had taken place and during which a large amount of knowledge and information on adult education in public libraries had been generated. There is little argument however that the community intelligence center of Learned's vision or Johnson's dream

of a People's University were still far from widespread concepts. Stone suggested several reasons: an apathetic public, a lack of cooperation and rivalry between education organizations, the harnessing of educational forces to serve narrow interests and powerful groups, and the scarcity of funds. He also noted that a few people were doing most of the work, as evidenced by repeated references to the same individuals and organizations [33]. In the same journal issue another writer addressing adult education in small communities was even more pessimistic and suggested that small libraries have huge problems of programming, small resources, lack of public and financial support, coordination and are plagued with institutional jealousy. Gloom, though mixed with some optimism, were reflected in his words

> The prospect seems dismal. But we can't turn back to just books, because adult education is going to become a vital library service. [10, p. 45]

A wide range of activities had developed in public library adult education in the 1950's but generally it was called a loose construction which negated any serious meaning as an identifying force [10]. As we shall see, however, the national complacency of the 1950's gave way to an activism which was to characterize much of the next decade in the nation's history. The short term and immediate effects in the area of adult learning and the public library were widespread. But, many of the arguments and issues of 1959 exist now, over two decades later, with minor variations.

*1956–Present*

The year 1956 sets the stage for much of what will be reported in this section. Prior to that year the public library had not been the recipient of federal funds. A significant lag had developed between the ideals and the actual practice of adult learning and services, particularly in small and rural areas. Fry [17] reported a U.S. Office of Education study of the fifties showing that 26 million rural residents were without any public library service, and that over 300 counties had no libraries at all. Furthermore an additional 50 million Americans had inadequate service [17]. In response to growing efforts on the part of the library profession and a well-organized political effort, developed over the previous 12 years, Congress in 1956 passed the Library Services Act (LSA). The act had two purposes, to bring library service to rural areas of less than 10,000 people where no (or inadequate) service existed, and to stimulate use of matching funds at state and local levels. Between 1957 and 1963 the act brought 42 million federal dollars to the states and the total expenditure for libraries was over 94 million dollars [23]. Although funds were not provided for construction of new buildings, the act had significant effects, especially in rural areas. Over 5 million new books were purchased, large numbers of bookmobiles were brought into service and regional libraries to coordinate services for isolated areas were widely developed [17]. The act was extended, without opposition in 1961, and was changed in 1964 to become the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA). This provided much needed federal support for renovation, rebuilding, and building new libraries in rural and urban areas, in addition to support and expansion of library services.

In 1957 the ALA renamed its earlier creation, the Adult Education Division, the Adult Services Division. This was a landmark event in that it was recognition of the potential which libraries had, not just for self-starting learners or already motivated learning groups, but for a wide range of other heretofore non-traditional recipients of library services, the aged, the illiterate, and the blind. To implement services

> the Division provided information on techniques used in various areas, such as television, reading improvement film utilization, reading guidance. The Division increased knowledge concerning the use of community resources in providing more effective service to adults, providing reading guides in various subject areas, prepared materials to facilitate the programs of national organizations and federal agencies, identified materials for use in study-discussion programs and worked on standards for adult services. [23, p. 98]

The concept of analyzing community needs in preparation for program development was promoted through the Library-Community project, a five year FAE funded effort. Education services for adults focused on community development. Spurred on by large amounts of federal support, adult services in public libraries often went beyond the library walls. Examples included a model store-front program developed in the inner city of New Haven and a library in a Spanish speaking area of Oakland which focused on teaching English to its clientele. Many efforts were expended in the area of illiteracy, and an ALA Committee on Reading Improvement for Adults was organized within the Adult Services Division. This committee produced a variety of pamphlets and publications to assist librarians and groups working with illiterate adults. Adult basic education courses were commonly held in libraries. Group learning activities using films and informal conversations and book talks with coffee and conversation were increasingly developed for specific segments of the population e.g., the aging, young mothers, high school teachers, and business executives [27]. Although the optimism and hope of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society are reflected in some of the literature of the time, not all librarians took to these activities like ducks to water.

> An initial period of curiousity and participation was often followed by an enormous decline in interest and community involvement, and librarians frequently found themselves expending great amounts of financial resources and staff time in services utilized by a very small group of patrons. Often the clientele for whom the library services were designed did not perceive their disadvantages in the same way as the largely middle class librarians who sought to assist them. [5, p. 102]

The 1970's gave way to the non-traditional stuent and a nationwide proliferation of programs to meet the needs

and interests of this "new" arrival on the education scene. Although libraries were very much a part of this process their potential was far from fulfilled. The Commission on Non-Traditional Study chaired by Samuel Gould, noted that for purposes of directed non-traditional study efforts

> The public library should be strengthened to become a far more powerful instrument for non-traditional study than is presently the case. [8, p. 82]

Nevertheless several major projects are reported in the literature. The College Entrance Examination Board and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) sponsored a two year program in which the Dallas Public Library served as a resource for students interested in taking the College Entrance Level Examination Program (CLEP) whereby college credit by examination could be attained. Spurred on by this moderately successful effort, the College Board, through its newly formed Office of Library and Independent Study and Guidance Projects, sponsored the Adult Independent Learning Project in which nine libraries provided, over several years, indepth services to adults outside the formal system [24]. In addition, considerable data were collected on adult patrons and their learning patterns. In spite of considerable interest and activity within the nine libraries, little evidence exists for the widespread adoption of the program. The following were cited as fundamental issues which must be overcome if new strategies were to be successfully developed and implemented. (1) Present allocations of funds often conflict with new ideas for how to use existing resources. (2) New ideas can threaten the morale of professional staff who like things as they are. (3) Current planning and evaluation procedures in libraries do not provide a good avenue for innovations. The current focus on acquiring, preserving, and organizing collections and service to individuals is frequently hampered. (4) There is a problem of effective dissemination and more is needed than merely providing information on good achievements of a given project [24].

The small body of literature concerning rural libraries points largely to a severe lack of services in general and to adult education in particular. One author suggested there had been five periods of development where efforts to overcome the rural-urban split and equalize service to rural inhabitants had been made:

1. Library Extension in the 1890's when traveling libraries began to be operated by state library agencies.
2. The introduction of County Libraries during World War I and the 1920's where local government was responsible for library service and providing an adequate tax base.
3. The introduction of cooperative and regional services during the 1940's and 50's.
4. The Library Service Act of 1956.
5. The Library Service and Construction Act of 1964. [13]

The 1926 ALA Commission on the Library and Adult Education painted a dismal picture of rural library services. It estimated that some forty-two million of a rural population of fifty-one million were without library services. While the commission noted, in the section on rural areas, "demonstrations in intensive rural education in the county library and state library fields are needed to blaze the trail and work out effective and adaptable methods" [7, p.76], it did not in its final overall recommendations place any emphasis on priorities attending to rural needs. One gets an arguably accurate reflection of the almost non-existent state of adult education in observations like

> These discussion groups are real experiments in stimulating the people of our democracy to think. It is to be regretted that more rural librarians are not conducting such experiments. Though group discussion seems to offer an effective way of awakening interest in many subjects, I found this method being used in only a few rural communities, possibly because many librarians are too timid or reluctant to assume the necessary leadership. [18, p. 23]

The state of rural librarianship did not improve significantly until the passage and implementation of the Library Services Act (1956) and the Library Services and Construction Act (1964). Earlier calls for countywide libraries while often morally supported, were not fiscally possible [13]. The federal legislation gave impetus, in particular, to the rise of regional library systems. In the rural state of Kansas for example, there are seven library regions. The regional library for each area is located usually in the largest community. In addition to serving that town, the regional library provides a range of services to local libraries over the several county region. Such services include bookmobiles, rural free book home deliveries, workshops on all aspects of library services—interlibrary loan, computer access nationwide to on-line retrieval services, staff development and training, and some emphasis in adult education programs. Degruyter [13] argued that rural library services have improved considerably over the past two decades in spite of the major obstacles to all public services in rural areas—scattered or low density population, poor transportation and communication systems, lack of financial resources, lower educational levels than in more populated areas and division of authority between several local governments which may not conform to other social economic or settlement patterns. She concluded optimistically that

> in spite of all this, rural library service does exist and has been extending coverage and improving in quality since the 19th century. The flow of migration reversed in the 70's and a young and well-educated population is moving from the city to the country. The next challenge of rural libraries may well be to adapt to larger populations with more urban values. [13, p. 522]

Another rural scholar addressing adult education programs in rural libraries noted that programs differ in degree, rather than kind, from other public libraries [25]. The limitations of staff and meeting room resources may also pose programming problems. She provided, however, several examples of projects funded through the National Endowment for the Humanities which usually have involved academic humanists in group discussions

with local people on issues of public policy; other programs involving training of library staff in humanities programming and evaluation, historical projects through the oral tradition, photography, museum displays which have tended to make some libraries more than book depositories. She also cited two non-library initiated efforts—the Appalachian Mobile Bookstore out of Berea, Kentucky, which travels the Appalachian region with books and other local cultural artifacts, has inspired several libraries to develop similar projects. The free university community education programs of the University for Man in Kansas were noted as having potential for library involvement [20].

## Conclusions

Several trends emerge from this portrayal of adult education in public libraries. Adult education has thrived when it has been supported by outside funding, the Carnegie Corporation in the 1920's and 30's, The Fund for Adult Education in the 1950's, the federal government through the 1956 and 1964 acts, and more recently through special projects of groups like the College Board and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Nearly thirty years ago it was noted that general agreement seems to pertain on three functions (a) furthering self-education, (b) providing material and informational services, and (c) using libraries as exhibit centers for community projects. Subject to dispute are program planning for community groups and sponsorship of book based discussions, special classes, forums, concerns, and lectures. Attacked from within and without the profession are trends towards assuming leadership in the establishment and maintenance of a diversified program of informal adult education in the community and mobilization of resources for identification and realization of desirable avenues for social change. More recent writings tend to suggest little change in this analysis [33].

In 1976 ALA minimum standards for public library systems called for (a) continuous or periodic study of the community, (b) participation of libraries in the life of the community, and (c) the correlation of library programs with those of other community organizations. "There is clearly a current emphasis on collaborative planning of community programs or joint sponsorship of services" [28, p. 505]. Estabrook [16] addressing trends in library community services, suggested that programs have not been incorporated into regular budgets—and that such services are notable for lack of sufficient reporting, program evaluation and established criteria for success. She went on to argue that librarians, like any other professionals, cherish their autonomy and that extensive interaction—particularly, with more disadvantaged groups and individuals, the targets of many such efforts—tends to be "inimicable to the instrumental goals of the professional group. As members of a profession, librarians become caught up in a movement to establish a place within society where what they will do will be recognized as valuable, and where they will be given the authority to carry out their duties effectively" [p. 157]. She concluded that the emerging trends are away from services to disadvantaged clients and a companion change from direct to indirect service.

If we stopped here one might be left with pessimistic thoughts for an active adult learning role for public libraries. However, the trend towards lifelong learning is now increasing and a future for lifelong learning activities without the fullest utilization of the resources which can be generated through the public library will be less than adequate. A report of the 1980 AEA/USA task force on libraries and lifelong learning stated that the "library is a major resource through its support of other educational institutions, its own programming and its interest and ability to meet the needs of independent learners" [1, p. 1]. While the report noted that the literature since the 1960's emphasized the library's responsibility to adult learners, it cautioned in a now familiar theme in this paper that

> in spite of these encouraging signs, however, most links between adult educators and librarians rest informally with concerned individuals. Few concerted efforts connect these two groups. Additional strategies are important to insure that both adult education and libraries achieve mutual benefits from working together in local communities or at national levels. Each field will then be prepared to recognize the other as both strive to meet the changes—political, economic, social and technological that will occur in the '80's. [1, p. 1]

More pragmatically a current analyst of library services offered this assessment of the situation.

> After years of quiet supportive contributions to adult education, the library once again has the opportunity to become an active learning center with the support and encouragement of a wide variety of nontraditional education agencies. The public library has been invited to join other educators in exploring the possibilities of providing education assistance for individuals of every need and interest. If the profession declines that invitation, the chance for bringing the library to the forefront of the community consciousness may be lost. It seems unlikely, in these days of decreasing revenues that a public institution which does not seize the opportunity to serve the community to the fullest extent of its human and material resources, will long be able to justifiy continued community and financial support. [5, p. 135]

If adult education is to become a central function of the public library in the absence of outside funding, then librarians and adult educators must accept the challenge to come and work in active collaboration so that this function becomes a reality. Failure to do so, especially in rural areas, will deprive many rural adults of the opportunity to participate in the learning society. This opportunity, according to a leading authority, is

> not a privilege or a right; it is simply a necessity for anyone young or old who must live with the escalating pace of change—in the family, on the job, in the community and in the worldwide society. [9, p. ix]

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