

NON-EUROPEAN LIBRARIES IN THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

with particular reference to the service administered by the Non-European Library Service, Transvaal (formerly known as the Transvaal Carnegie Non-European Library)

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THE South African Library Conference held in Bloemfontein in 1928, stressed the need to create adequate and free library services for the non-European population of the Union of South Africa, and recommended that such services be part of the general scheme of library development.

Slow progress has been made during the past 22 years, for the service has been handicapped by the lack of funds, hampered by the shortage of trained non-European librarians, and progress has been retarded by the shortage of suitable books, particularly books in the African languages, and also of books written in English and in Afrikaans in very simple language for adults learning to read. Another retarding factor has been the general lack of adequate library facilities. A great many non-European libraries have unsuitable library accommodation. Library rooms are often small, poorly lighted and badly ventilated. In one case in my experience, the caretaker of the building did his cooking in a room leading into the library, and the smoke succeeded in chasing the readers away every afternoon ! A great many centres have no library premises and books have to be kept in cupboards or stored away in boxes in school rooms and offices which are usually closed in the evenings, so that town workers cannot easily make use of books available to them through book distribution schemes.

The reading habit has developed slowly with the African, due partly to the lack of association with books. It is conservatively estimated that 40 per cent of the African people are literate, but literacy depends on the locality and in many areas it is considerably higher than 40 per cent.

Yet, despite setbacks and disappointments, the non-European library movement continues to make headway, and reports from all parts of the Union indicate that non-Europeans use and appreciate services offered to them.

The majority of our reading non-Europeans live in the slum areas of our cities and towns, and once the brief period of schooling is over, most non-Europeans have few opportunities of continuing formal study or recreational reading. The development of adequate library services and the provision of centrally

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situated, well lighted reading rooms, will do much to counteract the evil influences of those poverty stricken areas, by providing non-Europeans with the means to learn about their trades and professions, about arts and crafts, helping them to acquire an interest in reading both for formal study and for leisure hours. Experience has proved that one literate African enjoying the use of library facilities can bring the library to his companions who cannot read, for he enjoys the opportunity of being able to read to his friends and feels deeply the joy of knowing how to find wisdom in books.

BRIEF SURVEY OF EXISTING SERVICES

Transvaal

Johannesburg Public Library has provided a service to non-European borrowers since 1940. There are now 8,500 borrowers registered at the branch libraries of Winifred Holtby, Jubilee, Orlando and Orlando North, Coronationville and Pimville. During 1949-50, over 114,000 books were issued. The Orlando library was erected by Africans in 1950. This library caters especially for students and for children and provides a well-lighted, comfortable reading room. Coronationville library was also opened in 1950, and is used mainly by Coloured people of superior education. The circulation averages 3,000 monthly.

The service to the Baragwanath hospital includes visits to every patient in bed twice weekly. Over 12,000 books were issued during 1949-50.

Johannesburg Public Library also administers a schools' library service and 38,900 books were issued during 1949-50.

The Witwatersrand University allows its own non-European students to use the library.

The South African Institute of Race Relations has a unique collection of material on racial questions which the Institute library lends to members and to interested non-members.

The United States Information Library, and the Library of the United Kingdom Information Office, extend full facilities to interested non-Europeans.

In Pretoria, the Pretoria non-European Public Library has branches at Atteridgeville and at Marabastad. The two libraries serve over 800 members and during 1950 issued over 15,300 books.

The Union Education Department administers a postal service to non-European students. Non-Europeans are unable to visit the library to choose books and a deposit of 10s. is charged per book.

The non-European Library Service, Transvaal, (formerly known as the Transvaal Carnegie non-European Library) has found a home with the Transvaal Education Department (Native Education) and is at present housed with the

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Native Teachers' Library. Both libraries remain separate entities but are jointly administered. The non-European Library Service administers a book distribution scheme to 87 centres and maintains a student library service. During 1950 604 students made use of the service. All services administered by the N.E.L.S. are free.

Various municipalities in the Transvaal have established their own location libraries. These libraries supplement their book stocks by sharing in the book distribution scheme administered by the N.E.L.S. Benoni, Germiston, Springs, Roodepoort and Vereeniging have all established libraries for African people living in locations.

Natal

In Natal, the Durban Municipal Library extends a service to 35 depots, and also administers the Ndgoni Bantu Library in Durban. The library has 266 members, and 2,882 books were circulated during 1949.

In May, 1950, a non-European travelling library service was inaugurated, and up to the end of October had a membership of 782 and an average monthly issue of 1,755 books. The book stock is 4,162 volumes.

Natal University has a library at Sastri College. There are 300 members. About 6,000 books are circulated annually.

The M. K. Ghandi library, Durban, has about 7,000 books of special interest to Indians.

Natal Education Department has a library for teachers, and most missionary training colleges administer their own libraries for staff and students, notably Indaleni Institute, Adams College, John Dube Memorial Library and Edendale Library.

Orange Free State

The Carnegie grant assisted the Bloemfontein Public Library to start a circulating library system which at present supplies 12 centres.

Bloemfontein location has a standing non-European library housed in the Bantu Social Institute. The library has 2,500 volumes and is managed by a part-time non-European librarian.

Cape Province

The Cape Libraries Extension Association, with headquarters at the South African Public Library, administers a library service to the non-European communities in the Cape Town area.

The 8th annual report, 1949-50, recently issued by the Association, shows that remarkable progress is being maintained. Six branches have been established with a total of 2,627 members, of which 1,712 are adults and 915 are juvenile readers. In 1948 the annual circulation was 9,790 books; in 1949, 20,515 books

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were circulated and, during 1950, 55,808 books were issued, an average of 3,986 books monthly.

The City Council has asked the Administrator to declare Cape Town an urban area under the Provincial Library Ordinance. When this is done the City Council should be in a position to take over the Association's services as part of the first stage of the free library scheme.

The Cape Provincial Library Service Ordinance, No. 10 of 1949, provides for separate facilities for non-Europeans as an integral part of the service.

The first regional library area, i.e. divisions of Clanwilliam, Namaqualand and Vanrhynsdorp, is being developed now. Non-Europeans will be served by means of deposit collections renewed by the travelling library service. All costs are borne by the Administration. The scheme will be expanded to cover the whole province.

In the meantime, non-Europeans are also being served by the Book Distribution Service of the Cape Administration, each centre receiving a supply of 50 books which can be exchanged after 6 months. The service will be superseded by the regional scheme. At present there are about 26 library centres.

Since 1941, the Hyman Liberman Institute Library has been reorganized with the assistance of the Cape Libraries Extension Association.

The South African Native College at Fort Hare has a library of 19,500 volumes. This library has a specialized African collection.

Lovedale College, Alice, has a library of 11,000 volumes.

The Transkeian Native Reference Library, Umtata, has 1,300 books and 22 subscribers.

There are a number of non-European libraries in the Eastern Province organized by Public Libraries, with the assistance of a financial grant made by the Carnegie Corporation.

Kimberley location has a library of 300 books. The records of this library indicate that it is in urgent need of reorganization.

Many training colleges and missions have libraries. The Healdtown Missionary Institution has a library for the high school and the training college. Each library has about 400 members. The total annual circulation is about 10,000.

FINANCE

After the Bloemfontein Conference of 1928, the Carnegie Corporation, New York, made the sum of £3,000 available for the purchase of books for non-European libraries. The money was divided as follows: the Cape and the Transvaal each received £1,000, and the Orange Free State and Natal, £500 each.

At present, the financing of non-European libraries depends largely on local authorities. The City Council of Cape Town gives a grant of £1,600 annually, Durban contributes £413, and the Natal Education Department provides free

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rail warrants for boxes of books sent out of Durban. Bloemfontein City Council contributes £25 and the Education Department gives £100 annually. Fort Hare and the Natal University finance their own libraries. The Transkeian Native Reference Library receives a provincial grant of £50, and a further £25 from the United Transkeian General Council.

The Cape Provincial Administration is bearing the cost of establishing libraries for non-Europeans under the ordinance No. 10 of 1949.

In the Transvaal, Johannesburg City Council finances the non-European library service. Pretoria City Council contributes £250 annually and pays the salaries of two African librarians who are still called social workers. Various municipalities support their own location librarians, Germiston contributes £150 and pays the librarian's salary, Springs and Vereeniging are now spending over £400 annually on their location libraries.

The non-European Library Service, Transvaal, receives a grant of £300 from the Provincial Administration. Various municipalities contributed £65 during 1950 for library development. Donations by other interested authorities totalled £155 during 1950. The Transvaal Education Department houses the library and provides a staff of five Africans.

Transvaal Education Department finances its own Native Teachers' Library. The Union Education Department has a separate book stock for non-Europeans and spends approximately the same amount on books for both sections.

TRAINING

At present very few non-European librarians receive any recognized training for library work. The librarian of the non-European Library Service, Transvaal, reports that the work of compiling accurate statistics at library centres sharing in the book distribution scheme is frequently impossible, for depot librarians, though willing and enthusiastic, have little knowledge of library practice and book records, membership and circulation statistics are unreliable and haphazard.

The non-European is specially fitted to bring library service to his own people. He has that particular understanding which comes with experience of the difficulties and hardships and problems of the non-European, and if he is a conscientious, interested librarian, he will possess the friendliness, patience and tact so necessary in making non-Europeans feel at home in the library. This is never an easy task, for most non-Europeans are bewildered by rows of books on the library shelves. The non-European Library Service, Transvaal, pays special attention to the work of training the staff of the library to assist all visitors in the library, explaining the arrangement of the books, demonstrating the use of the catalogue, etc. Depot librarians are encouraged to come to the headquarters library, and all students who can possibly do so are asked to come to the

library to choose reading matter. This personal contact between the staff and the readers is deeply appreciated. Several hundred students visit the library each month.

Our experience in the Non-European Library Service, Transvaal, has been that a pleasant, simply furnished, well lighted library room with an intelligent, patient and friendly non-European librarian, can do much to encourage the non-European to acquire the reading habit. The majority of the members find that home conditions do not permit quiet study or recreational reading. Their homes are small, crowded and noisy. In the evenings there is cooking with much smoke from the fires, incessant chatter and laughter and very little privacy. Non-Europeans greatly appreciate the opportunity of using library rooms for study and during leisure hours for browsing among books. The urgent need to provide adequate library rooms, centrally situated, equipped with electric light and open in the evenings, cannot be too highly emphasized in furthering the efforts we are making to encourage non-Europeans to read and make use of library services.

An interesting development in library training for non-Europeans is the inauguration of a new course conducted by the South African Library Association for non-matriculants. This course, known as the Preliminary, is open to non-Europeans only, and it comprises an elementary knowledge of the principles of library practice, routine and administration, elementary cataloguing and classification, and the book stock, English, Afrikaans or the vernacular. Examinations have been held since 1949. The necessity for such a course becomes apparent when one considers the general educational development of non-Europeans who do not often enjoy the same educational facilities as the European. Library services for non-Europeans are expanding but the service is, nevertheless, severely handicapped by the lack of trained non-Europeans. The standard of the Preliminary is high, for it was felt that many non-Europeans might not advance beyond this stage of training, and the certificate is one which will merit the respect of both European and non-European library workers. The Preliminary and two years' library experience will enable the non-European to proceed to the Elementary examination of the South African Library Association. Matriculated non-Europeans are exempted from the Preliminary. No correspondence courses are available at present, but it is hoped that the South African Library Association will be able to make provision for such courses in the near future.

Various European Public Libraries provide elementary training for non-European branch librarians. At Fort Hare, the Librarian gives regular instruction in library practice to the students attending the University.

The establishment of library training centres for non-Europeans will do much to promote training and the consequent development of an improved library service. Non-Europeans will also be provided with the opportunity to meet each other and to discuss their own special problems with trained librarians. Non-Europeans may study for the library courses organized by the Uni-

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versity of Cape Town. The Cape Libraries Extension Association has reported that one of the librarians employed by the Association has gained his diploma, being the first non-European to have done so.

If schemes for training non-Europeans in library work are to be encouraged, efforts will have to be made to secure the future advancement of non-European librarians. At present there is no known scale of pay or even of recognized library status, and many of our non-European library assistants feel that their future is uncertain. In this way we are losing some of our best workers, and we are not attracting the most highly qualified into the library profession. All authorities employing library workers should be urged to recognize library status, designating those doing library work as librarians, not as social workers or as teachers carrying out library service, as is the case at present. These authorities should be urged to appoint librarians on fixed scales of pay according to their professional qualifications. Adequate pay and recognized status are two essentials in the task of ensuring the proper handling of a non-European library service.

BOOK SELECTION FOR NON-EUROPEAN LIBRARIES

The scope of this paper does not permit detailed discussion on book selection for non-European libraries. Some general trends may, however, be of interest.

Future progress of our non-European library movement depends largely on improved book selection. It is amazing how often one finds dilapidated copies of Gibbon's *Decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, Caesar's *Gallic Wars* (in Latin), *What every young girl should know* (published about 1890), up-to-date books on science (published about 1910 !) broken-down dictionaries, Latin, French and German ! All these books are of value to the right person and in the right place. From evidence available, there are apparently some people who consider that the non-European will devour any book, whatever its shape, size and condition, on the principle that any book is better than no book at all !

Our experience in the non-European Library Service, Transvaal, is that non-Europeans enjoy and use books much as we ourselves do, and with exceptions, will take reasonable care of books entrusted to them. During the past 2½ years, the student section issued nearly 4,000 books to members. No book was lost by any non-European and the librarian reports that books were carefully looked after and promptly returned. Over 20,000 books are issued annually at library centres, and losses are comparatively small. School library centres are often the greatest defaulters. Librarians working in location libraries seem better able to keep check on books than teachers, who though willing and enthusiastic library helpers, appear to change their positions more frequently, and are apt to shelve the responsibility of the school library from the one to the other !

There is, however, a great future for library service to children. Recently,

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the Non-European Library Service selected six centres for an experiment with new children's books. Each centre received 75 books. Our best issues were recorded at Payneville Location Library, Springs, where the books were issued nearly 3,000 times in the space of a few months. Sharpeville Location Library recorded an issue of over 400 in four months and Bothsabelo Training Institution of 233. Books were returned in fair condition. Many of them were the "Golden Books" series, cheap, gay and colourful and easy to read. All Librarians reported that the books were never on the shelves, for as soon as one was returned, there was an eager little non-European member waiting to fetch it away.

Our Coloured readers have shown tastes similar to those of the European. They enjoy detective stories, particularly Charteris, Cheyney, Christie, Horler and Sayers. Wild wests and adventure stories are asked for. All filmed and well known novels are in demand. Books on sport are popular, particularly cricket, rugby and boxing. Women enjoy R.M. Ayres and G.L.Hill and all light love stories. Nursing stories, too, are popular, particularly the "Sue Barton" series. The popular Afrikaans writers include H. Brand, Carinus, Friedenthal, Gros-kopf, C. M. van den Heever, Hobson, Langenhoven, Leipoldt, Lochner, D. F. Malherbe, Mikro and Sangiro. All writers of detective fiction are popular. Translations of Lewis Carroll, Charles Dickens, Rider Haggard are widely read. Translations of the famous Tarzan books are particularly popular. Coloured and African children like the "Hardy Boys". Girls are also showing an affection for detective stories.

The African still reads more for educational purposes, though he frequently enjoys books already mentioned. He will select abridged classics, books which have been filmed, books about Africa and the Africans and books about world affairs. He will look for familiar tales, Hans Andersen, Grimm, all folk tales, the works of Abrahams, Avery, Ballantyne, Max Brand, E. R. Burroughs, Charteris and Cheyney, C. M. Dixon, Conan Doyle, Farnol, Galsworthy, Zane Grey, Rider Haggard, O. Henry, James Hilton, Jack London, F. Marryat, Mason, Orczy, Alan Paton, Priestley, Sabatini, Sapper, Wells, Westermann, Wodehouse, Wren and R. Wright. Of the classics, Jane Austen, Blackmore, the Brontës, John Buchan, Bunyan, Lewis Carroll, Wilkie Collins, Joseph Conrad, Defoe, Dickens, Dumas, George Eliot, Goldsmith, Thomas Hardy, Kingsley, Scott, R. L. Stevenson, Dean Swift, Thackeray, Trollope, Mark Twain and Jules Verne are special favourites. Shakespeare and Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* are also asked for.

The Non-European Library Service, Transvaal, is attempting to encourage Africans to read more for recreational purposes than has been the case in the past. Only fiction and general non-fiction works are sent out to the depots. When students visit the library they are encouraged to take two books, one for recreational reading. Students and depots may reserve books which they wish to read, and 520 books were reserved during 1950. Of that number, 126 were works of fiction, 128

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were vernacular works, and 266 were works of general non-fiction and formal study.

A study of the records of the Non-European Library Service, Transvaal, for 1950, reveals that 2,693 books were issued from the student section. Of this total, 793 were fiction, 51 general, 24 philosophy, 100 psychology, 14 logic, 7 ethics, 39 religion, 119 sociology, 1 statistics, 25 politics, 36 economics, 44 law, 61 administration, 4 education, 6 commerce, 18 philosophy, 34 English language, 270 Bantu languages, 36 science, 51 biology, 96 anthropology, 77 useful arts, 33 fine arts, 39 poetry, 172 English drama, 88 Afrikaans literature, 150 history, 104 geography and travel, and 91 biography.

In the depots' section of the library it is estimated that about 20,000 books were issued to borrowers. It is estimated that about 55 per cent were fiction, 2 per cent general works, 1 per cent philosophy, 1 per cent religion, 3 per cent sociology, 1 per cent Africa and the Africans, 1 per cent language, 1 per cent science, 5 per cent anthropology, 1 per cent useful arts, 1 per cent fine arts, 5 per cent sport and pastimes, 3 per cent literatures, 2 per cent geography, 3 per cent travel, 3 per cent biography, 3 per cent history.

There is a great need for more books in the vernacular. During 1950 the library issued 856 books in the African languages. Some of the most popular books in each language are by the following writers :

N. Sotho : Endemann, Franz, Hoffman, Madiba, Matlala, Phala, Phaladi, Mphahlele, Phalane, Ramailia, Schwellnus, Sehlozimela, Serote, Van Zyl and Ziervogel.

S. Sotho : Damane, Khaketla, Lekgethoa, Leothe, Machobane, Mangoaela, Matlosa, Moerane, Mofokeng, Mofolo, Mohapeloa, Motsamai, Motsatse, Ntsane, Segoete, Sentšo.

Tswana : Brown, Leseyane, Moloto, Plaatjie, Raditladi, Schapera and Seboni.

Zulu : Colenso, Dhlomo, Doke, Dube, Haggard, Hutchinson, Made, Masondo, Mdhladhla, Mbata, Thwala, Vilakazi and Zungu.

Shangaan : Baloyi, Jacques, Junod, Maphophe, and Marivate.

Venda : Dzivhane, Lestrade, Motena, Schwellnus and Van Warmelo.

Xhosa : Hobson-Mqhai, Jabavu, Jolobe, Mqhayi, Ndawo, Sinxo.

Translations of Shakespeare and Bunyan are widely read.

POLICY FOR THE FUTURE

Rural and urban libraries are to-day overcoming their problem of a stagnating book stock by participation in provincial library schemes. In a memorandum on library services for the Bantu people of the Union of South Africa, prepared in 1949 by the committee of the Non-European Library Service, Transvaal, it was stated that a survey of the use made of existing services showed that the

non-European people were sufficiently advanced in the general use of a library service to warrant expenditure on the development of adequate library services which should be free.

The committee recommended the circulating library system as best suited to the needs of this country. The basis of the system is a central collection of books circulating through local depots to be established at schools, missions, locations, etc. A central reference library for students should be collected and housed in an easily accessible place for all non-European borrowers.

To make the scheme effective, the committee suggested that, for library purposes, the Provinces could be divided into regions, with provincial regional libraries to house central collections of books for circulation to depots. The committee stressed the need to use the services of trained non-European librarians, and urged that schemes to train librarians in courses, such as those administered by the South African Library Association, should be adopted without delay.

The committee proposed that, as existing services are hampered by the lack of funds, the Union Government should contribute £2 for every £1 collected by other interested bodies, and further, that the Union Government should sponsor the publication of books in the vernacular.

The committee urged that local authorities should provide more adequate library accommodation, and that, where possible, electric light should be installed.

The South African Library Association can do a great deal to further the development of a non-European library movement, for the support of trained European librarians is an absolute essential to any future progress. Experience has shown that, where the librarians of local European libraries have become interested in supervising nearby non-European libraries, great progress has been recorded. Branch administrations can do much to secure the support of European librarians for non-European libraries in their areas. Through the Council, the Education Committee, and the Branches, the South African Library Association can strive to interest local authorities in non-European library services, urging them to provide better facilities, to contribute to a much greater degree towards the maintenance of satisfactory services and to employ trained non-European librarians on fixed scales of pay, recognizing their professional library qualifications.

The non-European library movement is yet in its infancy. Non-European libraries require more money, larger and better collections of books, trained librarians and more adequate library accommodation. It will be a very long time before non-Europeans can be in a position to administer their own library services. They are too few, too untrained, too scattered, poor and unrecognized, to act together without the support and guidance of trained Europeans. The work we have been doing is largely experimental, and as yet we have only touched on the edge of a great need. The time has come for us to co-ordinate our efforts and to go forward together in our different provinces along the road that leads to progress.

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