



Rural Library Service Newsletter



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Rural Life/Rural Libraries Reviewed and Revered at PLA

Kathleen Gates addressed the 175 rural librarians who had gathered for the opening session of the day long PLA conference, "Rural Roots". She stated the purpose of her talk was to stimulate "thought, feelings & discussion on what it means to be rural. The popular view of rural as a white male agrarian society is an incomplete picture and that defining rural is in the eye of the beholder."

Rural life is diverse with both visible & invisible members who define rural based on their own personal experiences & perceptions. While there may be some who share in the vision of a clean, wonderful & idyllic rural life; there are according to Gates many blacks, spanish speaking people, migrant workers, gay men & women, & the poor who see rural life as hard and cruel.

Rural life is also constantly changing. Gates, a rural psychologist from Good Thunder, Minnesota, identified & chronicled the major forces that have helped shape the rural world throughout the 20th Century. World War I opened the rural community to other values & cultures as soldiers visited other lands & brought home brides from other countries. The Depression & the Dust Bowls of the 1930's created an uprooting as farmers lost their homes. The 1950's saw the emergence of a new rural resident -the suburbanite, & in the 60's the focus was on poverty, the environment, & concerns about the destruction of lands by mining interests. In the first part of the twentieth century, 60% of the population was rural, today it is about 10%.

The other principle speaker at the April 3rd St. Louis gathering of rural librarians was Ann Kanten, Minnesota's Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture.

A former regional library trustee, Ms. Kanten calls herself a farmer. "To be on the land, to be a farmer means there is a sense of historical richness as the land is passed on to generation to generation, it means a relationship, a belonging, a commitment to place & community..it feels good... and at Easter time with the snow melting & the rich black dirt showing through, it even smells good."



Ann Kanten confers with John Philip of the Ohio State Library after her powerful address on the Farm Crisis.

Kanten warned, "Today there is trouble on the land: a bushel of corn & wheat brought about the same prices in September of 1985 as it did in 1948-49. In the past 40 years egg prices are up only 8¢, pork is

up only about 14¢ a pound, & turkey is 13¢ a pound more.

Farmers are receiving 1940 wages to live on in the eighties, & it just can't be done. And it is getting worse. Farm income in 1982 was 30 billion, today it is only 16 billion."

She compared the Agriculture Crisis to an earthquake. "The First Tidal wave took over the fragile, the Second Wave occurring now is taking out the "Best" those (farmers) who have done their best, expanded to survive, used their ingenuity & creativity, were progressive & followed the best advice available. The Third Wave is boarding up main streets. The next is going to roll over this whole nation. At a March, 1986 Bankers Meeting in Minnesota, there were forecasts of 90 billion dollars in lost loans to agriculture."

Kanten asked, "What will these (unpaid loans) mean for the economy as it works its way through the system?" She then answered, "higher interest rates, lost jobs, shifts of population, 1/3 of Minnesota farmers will lose their lands, more national debt and erosion of the tax base. In addition there will be dramatic increases in social services, medical assistance & food stamps.

According to Kanten "There is a tremendous amount of denial of how bad it is". She instructed librarians "it is your business to disseminate information. Don't make it passive, you have to know, you have to care, and some how have that community you work with involved in what's happening now & what the future may be. With information there is hope, with two communities (city/country) going together there is hope, & when communities face an issue there is hope."

INFORMATION NEEDS OF RURAL PEOPLE

In addition to the principle speakers, the Rural Roots program featured 16 others in small group sessions. Three of them spoke on the information needs of rural people. They were Barbara Jacquet-Kalinoski of Thief River Falls, Minn., Lisa DeGruyter, Austin, Texas; and Danny Hales, Live Oak, Florida.

Ms. Jacquet-Kalinoski described her library community as the home of large wheat farmers. The environment greatly influences the use of her library in two significant ways. 1. Access to

the library & 2. the types of materials wanted. Farmers are frequently denied access to the towns & libraries of North-west Minnesota due to road closings by winter blizzards & heavy spring & summer rains. She stated communities that are dependent on the weather frequently favor materials on religion & faith. Her community is also interested in issues such as conservation & nuclear dump sites which the federal government proposes to be placed in rural areas.

Other favorite subjects are the raising of domestic animals, the identification of bird species & their eating habits, & the construction of bird houses.

With the downturn in the farm economy, farmers have begun to drop their farm magazine subscriptions. Thus, Jacquet-Kalinoski sees a greater need for the library to purchase farm periodicals. She also sees a need to have computers for farmers during the hours that the extension office is closed.

Lisa DeGruyter followed with a report on her doctoral study of a West Virginia County. In that study she wanted to answer the following questions: 1. Are Rural Library users really different from city users? 2. Are information needs really different between urban & rural users? 3. What are the library's products & what should they be?



Lisa DeGruyter, Texas; Tom Hennen, Wisc.; and Gabriel Hegyes, Kansas, sharing ideas between sessions.

DeGruyter's findings were that users of both city & rural libraries are basically the same. Library users, urban & rural alike, are most active in the community. Active not only in the sense of local memberships in clubs & organizations but they are people who play games, visit neighbors, tour museums, etc. Users more than non-users of libraries own more books, read more books & magazines, & are more apt to solicit professional help. The information uses of the libraries by both urban & rural adults are also basically the same as the library serves as a place for friends to meet, to see exhibits, to attend meetings, to conduct research & to borrow materials for themselves & for their children.

A major difference between the rural & urban community is that in the rural community there are fewer alternatives to meet the citizens' entertainment, cultural & information needs. Therefore it is critical in rural areas for public libraries to assume the responsibility for fulfilling these community needs.

Danny Hales followed Lisa by quoting from a speech that she had once given at an American Library Association Conference. She had said, "We are already competent on fiction, let's spend more time on meeting information needs." Hales stressed the need for specific, recent & accurate information over data. He warned the audience to provide relevant services or libraries will be replaced by the changes that are occurring in technology, the local monetary support, & public demands.

GETTING RURAL NON-USERS INTO THE LIBRARY

Lee Bock of the Depere Branch of the Brown County (WI) Library spoke on ways of encouraging library use by rural non-users. She stressed three areas of library responsibility: finding out what information is needed, making sure that the information is accurate, & helping the agricultural community to become comfortable using the library.

In addition to more specialized information, rural library users need many of the same materials as other library patrons--consumer information, books on parenting & cooking, & specialized leisure reading.

Making sure that the information is accurate, especially in children's books, is very important. Materials should be examined with a view toward identifying stereotypes. Librarians must look closely at illustration backgrounds in terms of

their realism. Also, good non-fiction books on farm life do not portray animals as having human characteristics, or depict farms as "dumb". They should show farming as a business as well as a way of life & should not relegate farm wives to the kitchen.

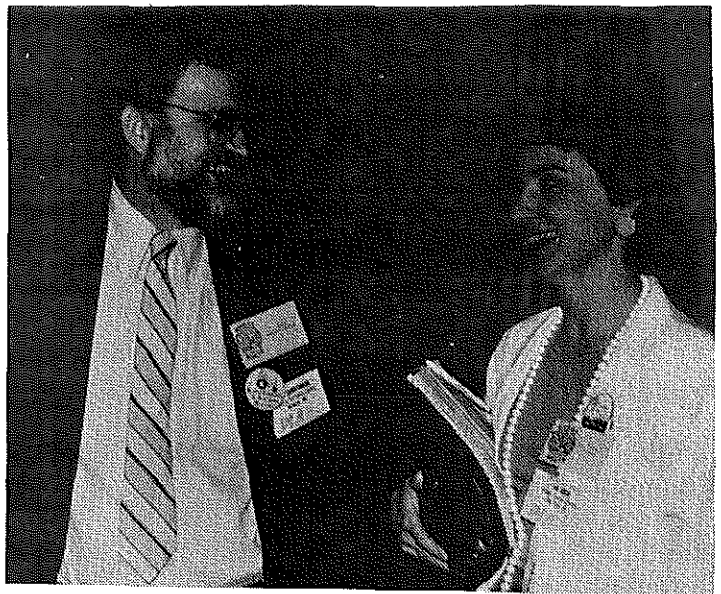
Helping rural people become familiar & comfortable with library use involves programming with & for the rural community. Some ideas which have been used at Brown County Library include:

- Have an agricultural fair at the library. Invite local 4-H & FFA clubs to bring animals & spend the day explaining their care & habits to the public.

- Sponsor a rural open house annually. This could be held in conjunction with National Agricultural Day (Mar. 21), National Farm Safety Week (3rd full week in Sept.) or National Farm-City Week (Nov. 21-27, 1986).

- Videotape story hours in farm or rural settings for showing on local cable TV.

- Produce video-taped programs about farm life. In Wisconsin such a series, entitled "Around Brown County", includes segments which follow various farm animals through their life cycles & explains their care & treatment on the farm.



John Christenson, organizer of the PLA Rural Library Conference, chats with Lee Bock.

In 1981 Lee Bock began a formal evaluation of books on modern agriculture. Later she examined & evaluated over 60 books for children, only a few of which she recommended. Her most recent bibliography of children's books about modern agriculture, which was compiled for the Co-operative Children's Book Center in Madison, WI, contains 15 titles.

BABY ANIMAL ON THE FARM by Hans-Heinrich Isenbart. Translated by Elizabeth D. Crawford. G.P. Putman's Sons, 1981.

FARM GIANTS by Ross Olney. Atheneum, 1982.

FARM MACHINES by Nichols Wykeham. Raintree, 1979.

JOEL: GROWING UP A FARM MAN by Patricia Demuth. Dodd, Mead & Co., 1982.

LARGE ANIMAL VETERINARIANS by Rod Bellville & Cheryl Walsh Bellville. Carolrhoda, 1985.

MACHINES ON THE FARM by Hope Irvin Marston. Dodd, Mead & Co., 1982.

MILK by Donald Carrick. Greenwillow, 1985.

THE MILK MAKERS by Gail Gibbons. Macmillan, 1985.

ROUND-UP by Cheryl Walsh Bellville. Carolrhoda, 1982.

STOCKYARDS by Rod Bellville & Cheryl Walsh Bellville. Carolrhoda, 1984.

TRACTORS by Herbert S. Zim & James Skelly. William Morrow, 1972.

TRACTORS: FROM YESTERDAY'S STEAM WAGONS TO TODAY'S TURBOCHARGED GIANTS by Jim Murphy. J.B. Lippincott, 1984.

THE YEAR AT MAPLE HILL FARM by Alice & Martin Provensen. Atheneum, 1978.

ON THE LAND by Elinor Lander Horwitz.. Atheneum, 1980.

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE LAND? by Laurence Pringle. Thomas Y. Crowell, 1981.

RURAL CRISIS OUTREACH

Mary Lou Isernhagen & Marcia Ransom, members of the staff of the Central Kansas Library System, presented a session on helping rural residents cope with the crisis caused by the current economic situation. Kansas faces the same problems that other rural states are encountering: declining farm populations, a drop in the number of farms & a corresponding increase in their size, & a steadily aging population in rural areas. Because many family farm owners are in financial trouble, their needs for help in dealing with stress, money management & other crisis situations have increased dramatically in the past few years. CKLS has recognized & responded to these needs by developing a series of tools for use by local librarians & patrons.



Marcia Ransom selects some handouts from the many on display at the conference.

Providing information services is a primary function of the public library. As the initial entry point for an information request, the library performs the linkage function between patron & service agency or organization. More than other agencies, the library is uniquely suited to this task. Local librarians are urged to be aware of & sensitive to the crisis needs of their patrons & to develop local resources to meet those needs. The library system has provided them with worksheets for identifying

information needs & existing service agencies. In addition, they have developed a questionnaire for use in producing a list of local community resource network organizations/agencies. When developing a community resource file, local librarians are encouraged to consider the following questions:

1. What kinds of information do people ask for/need?
2. What will be the content & extent of the file?
3. Who will collect & compile the information?
4. What are the key words to index the file?
5. How will the file be organized?
6. How & When will the file be updated?

Central Kansas Library System has also put together some resources at their headquarters in Great Bend, which can be used by librarians & patrons. One of these is the Rural Resource Manual, which has been distributed to local libraries within CKLS & to other Kansas Library Systems. It is intended as a resource aid for helping people cope with the many changes taking place around them. The manual is divided into eight sections & addresses some of the immediate issues confronting rural residents. It contains articles, brochures & pamphlets, & listings of existing agencies dealing with mental health, legal assistance, financial forms, legislative & career options. The manual is available from CKLS for \$30; all materials in it may be photocopied. Also included are suggestions for promoting the use of the manual by library patrons.

In addition to the Rural Resource Manual, CKLS is developing a Rural Issues Collection. This is to be a core collection of periodicals, books & videocassettes dealing with the problems facing rural areas. The idea for the collection came from a meeting of representative farmers, librarians & rural agency personnel. The project is being funded by a grant from the Kansas Library Network Board. Collection development is to be based on several premises about what libraries can constructively do to help solve rural problems:

1. Rural people want access to information on legal, financial & mental health (stress) processes, particularly exploring alternatives.
2. Libraries need to work with existing agencies to provide support to rural residents seeking information, to help disseminate information from all agencies & to avoid duplication of effort.

3. Information should be easy-to-read, up-to-date & in short, easily accessible formats.

4. Libraries could be sites for short courses & seminars to train rural residents to use materials.

5. Training sessions will be provided for librarians & rural agency personnel & groups in how to use the materials & how best to make them available to area residents.

THE ONE PERSON, OR LESS, LIBRARY

Jan Feye-Stukas is a consultant for the Minnesota Office of Library Development in St. Paul, MN. She gave an excellent presentation on the problems facing staff members in one-person libraries, & some solutions to those problems.

Pointing out that a small library cannot be all things to all people, Ms. Feye-Stukas stated that librarians must first decide what role the library will play. Some appropriate functions for one-person libraries might be: community information center, children's door to reading, popular reading center, & students' back-up.

Duties of the one-person library staff are many & varied. What percentage of the librarian's time is spent on each area may vary depending on the library's perceived role. These duties & average expenditures of time include:

Reference/Readers' Advisory (0-70%) -- user guidance, answering questions, assisting in the use of materials, reading reviews.

Collection Development/Maintenance (20%) -- materials selection, handling gifts, weeding, inventory, acquisitions, cataloging, processing, repairs.

Circulation (50%) -- understanding & interpreting policies, borrower registration, charging/discharging materials & filing cards, shelving/reshelving, processing reserves & interlibrary loans, overdues.

Administration (20%) -- maintaining communication & attending meetings, public relations, preparing reports & budgets, maintaining records, training substitutes & volunteers, building maintenance, ordering supplies, long range planning.

Programming (.5%) -- on- or off-site programs, story hours, films, etc., developing programs.

There are many pros & cons, for both users & staff, in dealing with a one-person library. For users, the benefits include easily accessible collections, personalized service, easy access to the governing body, & the fact that popular materials are usually available quickly. On the other hand, the collection is small & resources limited, the staff is usually overworked & sometimes untrained, quarters may be cramped, often the library is open limited hours, & facilities are not conducive to privacy.

The staff of the one-person library have to contend with lack of time to complete their work, poor training & isolation, low budgets, poor facilities, & a vulnerability in terms of safety. However, there are certain benefits to be derived. These include a high status in the community, the opportunity for personal growth in many subject areas, the ability to be a change agent & to influence people & events, the fact that the librarian can see the results of her/his work, & being able to know what people want from the library.

LACK OF TIME: Help people help themselves by having good signage.
Interfile juvenile & adult nonfiction.
Make the photocopier publicly accessible & coin-operated.
Use volunteers.
Simplify charging procedures.
Establish a calendar for cyclical activities & a written list of weekly duties.
Use prepared publicity items.

POOR TRAINING & ISOLATION: Seek advice & counsel from other librarians.
Spend time working in another library.
Become acquainted with the basic library literature.
Attend workshops & conferences.
Remember you have rights as well as responsibilities.

LOW FUNDING: Always work toward getting more.
Use current resources wisely.
Try alternative sources.

LACK OF SPACE: Weed ruthlessly.
Use current space more wisely.
Keep a lookout for larger space.

BY: John M. Houlahan, Administrator
Marlys F. Cresap, Consultant
NORTHWEST REGIONAL LIBRARY

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ETC. ...

DID YOU KNOW?

Have you been bugged by patrons wanting to give you a book & asking you to assess its value for tax purposes? If so you might be interested in knowing that according to the Tax Reform Act of 1984 a donee may not act as a qualified appraiser. In other words the library may not make an appraisal for use by the donor for tax purposes. Libraries receiving gifts valued at over \$5,000 will be required to use a Donee Information Return Form number 8282 which is available from the Internal Revenue Department.

"LIBRARIES ON THE MOVE" workshop is to be held June 10-13, 1986 at the Student Center at the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Illinois.

Topics include:

- Marketing Rural Library Services
- Rural Library's Role in Interagency Cooperation
- Proposal for Library Legislation. The Structure & Governance of Rural Libraries.
- Access to Library Service in Rural Areas.
- Strengthening Local Public & School Libraries in Rural Areas.

Registration fee is \$60.00. Campus housing for all three nights are \$48.00 for singles and \$39.00 for doubles.

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