



Rural Library Service Newsletter



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Midwest Library Conference Raises Rural Awareness

BY: John M. Houlahan, Ed. Rural Library Service Newsletter & Jim Newsome, Traverse des Sioux Library System, Mankato, Minnesota.

Rural is in the eye of the beholder. Such was the message of Kathleen Gates in her keynote address at the first annual Midwest Rural Library Conference hosted by the Traverse des Sioux Library System of Mankato, Minnesota. A psychologist from Good Thunder, Minnesota, Ms. Gates described how rural is perceived through the definitions of government, the works of sociology and psychology, in the songs of country western singers and in the lives of farmers. She chided Lexicographers saying they all must be city folks as they describe rural as "rustic, country-fied, simple, artless, plain & unadorned."

She searched everywhere to help her audience to come to an understanding of what it means to be rural. She used literature citing two characters in Sinclair Lewis's classic Main Street to demonstrate quite differently held perceptions of rural life. There was Carol Kennicott, the young doctor's wife, who saw Gopher Prairie as the "end of the world". Then, there was Vida Sherwin who saw it as a "rough diamond".

Turning from the works of the great rural author, Gates read the definitions of rural that the audience had prepared. Some of the more notable ones were "Rural is were ET means Ernest Tubbs." "Rural means Real Urgent Reasons To Assist Libraries." and "Rural is where the next MacDonalds is a 3 hour drive."

Through a mixture of recordings, readings & words, Gates painted a picture of rural that wasn't all farms and farmers but one of small towns, businesses and resorts; with multi-racial cultures; and having both poor & rich citizens. It is a place with many eyes & views & each person possessing its own personal definition of rural drawn from their work, life style, and environment.

She shared these observations with the 320 librarians, trustees and exhibitors who attended the Rural Library Conference held September 27-28, 1984 in Mankato, Minnesota.



Traverse des Sioux Staff takes a breather from processing the Conference's 320 librarians, trustees, and exhibitors. On the tables were promotional materials from the Mankato Regional Library System as well as items from the Marigold Library System of Alberta, Canada.

They came from 15 states and Canada covering both coasts from the State of Washington to Delaware & New Hampshire from far south as Missouri and Kansas to the Canadian Province of Alberta. Although Regional and State Library personnel were present, it was largely just rural library practitioners from places like Buhl, Minnesota; Marble Rock, Iowa; & Verdigre, Nebraska.

They came to learn from others, to share their knowledge, and to experience what they frequently don't find at state and national conferences - programs about them & for them.

Following Ms. Gates were 27 other speakers & panelists offering their opinions, advice, & information on a wide range of topics such as rural media, video, cultural services, business information & serving the non-users.

Lee Bock spoke on "Getting Rural Non-users into the Library." Bock, Children's Librarian in the small community of De Pere, Wisconsin, noted that farmers are now business-people and must be approached by libraries in new ways. Horse-drawn hay wagons and cute animals still abound in contemporary children's book about farms. It is time to move beyond these inaccurate stereotypes which continue to haunt us. In financially tough times like today, librarians & farmers need each other for survival. Farmers need information, rural libraries need the support of the agricultural populations who are often the opinion-makers and chief tax base in local communities.

"Does the library have anything for farmers," Bock asks? Yes. Farmers are people & have the same information needs as others: leisure activities, computers, management skills, personal relationships, cooking, etc. They also have unique needs such as tractor repair manuals, feed-rations schedules, veterinary guides, & numerous ag. facts. Libraries which have anticipated these needs are full of success stories - farmers saving time & money, farmers making wiser decisions because of their local library.

But just having the appropriate resources

isn't enough, according to Bock. How do we get farmers to use them? The strategy devised in De Pere is to first make rural users feel comfortable with the library. A sense of rapport & of "ownership" is instilled in farm families. The central means used to create this positive climate is programming. A key to Bock's programming is using rural residents as presenters in demonstrations geared toward townspeople. One ongoing example is an annual Agri-Culture Day. 4H & FFA groups take over the entire library, demonstrating farm crafts such as cheese making. Animals such as goats and pigs are invited in. The ag. families who present these views of their lifestyle get a positive feel for the library environment. The library also sponsors 3 weekly agricultural programs on cable television which are used to provide information to farmers while making a pitch for the library.

Lee Bock insists that in-house activities are only part of the effort to build links with rural non-users. Librarians must go to the non-users on their own turf. She recommends several possible ways:

1. Sponsor and take city people on tours to local farms;
2. Make video-tape demonstrations about what the library can do for farmers, & present them to ag. groups such farm bureaus, REA meetings, or seed & fertilizer meetings;
3. Have booths at county fairs & fill them with the library's ag. information;
4. Go to ag. shows at local arenas.

"In general, venture out into the agricultural community. Be a risk-taker and make yourself vulnerable. Get beyond books and put away but, but, but. By becoming visible to non-users & making them comfortable you will gradually bring them into the rural library worlds"

In keeping with the conference Keynote message, rural being in the eye of the beholder, Jane Feye-Stukas, Minnesota's Office of Library Development & Services, spoke on "The One person or Less Library" from the view points of its user and its staff (1 person). Positive findings include accessibility of collection by walking or short drives,

personalized attention, and ease of access to governing authorities and funding bodies. Negatives include small collections, few hours open, frequently inadequate facilities, and not enough time to do all tasks.

Jan Feke-Stukas outline 5 categories of responsibilities for one-person staff: Reference & Readers Advisory; Collection Development & Maintenance; Circulation; Administrative and Programming.



John Christenson, conference organizer, host, & master of ceremonies reviews his notes for his fourth role at the rural library conference-presenter.

To combat the long list of duties & the short time allocated to complete these tasks, the Minnesota State Library Consultant offered tips on how to save time recommended getting a telephone answering service which could accept renewals and give library hours; place book trucks accessible to the public so you won't have to shelve as many, & simplify charging procedures to enable self check-out. Other solutions offered were on what to do about poor training/isolation, low funding & space. Photocopies of her transparencies are available from her at the Minnesota Office of Library Development & Service in St. Paul.

The final speaker of the 2 day program & one who left more than one in attendance with a dry throat & moist eyes was Ann Kanten. Closely involved both with farmers & libraries, she presently serves as Minnesota's Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture & was one of the founders of a Minnesota Regional Li-

brary System, she united these two interests with her words, "The only way for cash strapped American farmers to straighten out their current financial situations is to get involved in the political process. And, by providing accurate farm information & timely periodicals, rural libraries are the place where that involvement can begin."



Ann Kanten (r) being congratulated by a new admirer after her impassioned defense of the American Family Farm.

She spoke forcefully on the economic hard times & the depopulation of rural communities citing a recent survey of Minnesota farmers which said 54% of them would be out of business in the next 2-5 years. The hard lesson learned from Kanten & the other speakers of the Midwest Conference was that rural libraries must address the service concerns & information needs of one of its largest constituents the American Farmer.



Librarians following the handouts of one of the 28 speakers featured at the recent Midwest Conference on rural libraries.

Colorado's Resort Libraries Concerns Varied

Stan Oliner of Denver, Colorado will be keeping Rural Library Service Newsletter readers updated on developments of a rural/resort library round table. There has been much discussion about the need for such a forum in Colorado in recent years and there is now strong hope that one will be included under the wing of the Colorado Library Association. The following concerns were drafted by Mr. Oliner after a visit to 11 resort communities. These were originally listed in the Western Slope Library Bee, Number 17, 1984

- # Library salary survey of state resort areas and the region.
- # Lending policies for residents, non-residents, transient help for the hospitality industry.
- # Overdue book recovery.
- # Library service to local conventions through short-term contracts.
- # Winter and summer reading programs. . .Needs beyond the New York Times.
- # The resort library as the community calendar.
- # A Wish List. . .fund raising from non-residents and how to do it.
- # Friends of the Library. . .a state-wide talent pool.
- # Periodical collections for resorts. . .Needs beyond the New York Times.
- # Continuing education.
- # Film Festival circuit. . .both adult and youth services.
- # The marketing of the library to the local resort association/chamber of commerce. . . what about state and regional associations?
- # Cooperative materials and service grants to resort libraries. . .private and public . . .how to find and where to apply.
- # Collection development on specific topics in high demand at resorts (hiking, mountaineering, mountain botany, ecology, impact statements, skiing, rafting, fly fishing, etc.) What about a mini-union list or buying meetings? Corporate donations?
- # ILL delivery for resorts. . .is the U.S. Post Office the answer?
- # Beyond the Gideon Bible. . .books for hotels/lodges and their guests.
- # How to pass a building campaign/mill levy in a resort area.
- # ALA Public Library Standards adapted for resort area service.
- # Multi-type library cooperation in resort communities/areas.
- # Attracting and keeping an energetic resort area library staff.

-----Compiled by Stan Oliner, 7684 East Mercer Place, Denver Colorado 80237-----



Gilpin County Library, about 20 miles west of Denver, is Colorado's smallest public library. It has 345 registered borrowers out of a countywide population of 2,798. The library is open 5 days a week for a total of 26 hours.

The library is completely isolated from other businesses and work sites. In fact there is no major grocery store in the entire county. Because the facility is not near a patron drawing area, the board recently conducted a traffic flow survey. Additionally after years of volunteers workers and donated materials, a mill levy was passed at the November General Election to provide funds for the library. Hopes are now for finding a facility with an improved location and more space.

ETC. . .

Announcements: First Annual Great Plains Film Festival - April 26-28, 1985, Holiday Inn Central, 72nd Street - I-80, Omaha, Nebraska. On tap is a 3 day festival featuring an estimated 100 or more non-theatrical films, and numerous speakers (one from the Motions Picture Academy). For more information contact: Richard Bock, P. O. Box 14006, Omaha, NE 68124.

The Southern Regional Conference on Rural Adult Education which was to be held in October in Lexington, Kentucky was cancelled. Plans are being made for rescheduling in February, 1985. If interested contact Samuel K. Moore, Project Coordinator, Action Agenda Project, University for Man, 1221 Thruston, Manhattan, Kansas 66502.

Requests: Public Library Association's (PLA) Presidents Program for Chicago '85 is celebrating Small & Medium-sized libraries with a slide show. The program is called "The Low-Budget, Feel Good, Multi-Sensory, Public Library Road Show". PLA's Small & Medium Size Library Section is seeking slides of libraries. They are asking for at least 10 slides with the following qualifications:

1. Use a 35 mm color slide film.
2. Stick to a horizontal format for all slides.
3. Have at least one slide that identifies what part of the country you're from i.e. an identifying sign, ski slopes, sand dunes, or beach in the background.
4. Focus on people-as many close-up smiling faces as possible. We want to see a lot of happy, appreciative patrons getting prompt, courteous service, in short, people using and loving their library.
5. Also focus on the variety of services you offer and the variety of people you serve.

Because of the volume of slides involved, your slides will not be returned. So make duplicates of those you treasure.

Send your 10+ slides to the following address by January 1, 1985.

Kathy Coster
Library Video Network
Blue Sky Studio
1811 Woodlawn Drive
Baltimore, MD 21207

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Outputm - a menu driven microcomputer program on output measures has been developed by the Center for Rural Librarianship. The package includes a floppy disk and documentation. Outputm can be run on the IBM PC, the IBM PC-XT and the Columbia Microcomputer. The disk and documentation cost \$99. For more information contact Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship, College of Library Science, Clarion University of Pennsylvania, Clarion, PA 16214.

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New Publications: Rural Development Perspectives is the successor to an occasional publication of the same title published by USDA November 1978-September 1981. This new quarterly starting in Oct. of this year will feature in each issue 8-10 articles by leading rural researchers and specialists, colorful charts and maps depicting rural trends and conditions, digests of rural research findings and reviews of important books on rural growth and problems. Cost is \$10 per year, \$12.50 for foreign subscriptions for more info write Rural Development Perspectives, Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 20402, or call Thomas McDonald, 202-447-7305.

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Support for Farm Materials Review Sought. Booklist regularly has been featuring reviews of farming materials. These have been prepared by Thomas Hennen, director of the Racine-Walworth County Library System in Racine, Wisconsin. In the October 1, 1984 issue, the editor is requesting Booklist subscribers to respond to the need for and the methods of utilizing the farm materials column. If you have been or are interested in this column you may wish to convey your feelings to Bill Ott, Editor, Books for Adults. Booklist, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Rural Readings, Falcigno, Kathleen and Polly Guynup. "U.S. Population Characteristics: Implications for Libraries", Wilson Library, September 1984, p. 23-26.

James, Calvin and Rachel A. Rosenfeld, American Farm Women: Findings from a National Survey. National Opinion Research Center, Chicago, Illinois 1981.

The Role of Libraries and Information Technology. Joint Congressional Hearing on the Changing Information Needs of Rural America : July 21, 1982. Y3.L61:2C76, USDA and National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.

Sacks, Carolyn, The Invisible Farmers: Women in Agriculture Production. Rowman & Allanheld, Totowa, New Jersey, 1983.

POSITION AVAILABLE RURAL AREA.

Administrative Position: Director Regional Library Bookmobile Center.

Supervise 3 FTE and involved in building project. Salary \$16,300-19,000. St. Martin, Ohio (45 minutes from Cincinnati.)

For More Information Write:

Annette Rader, State Library of Ohio
65 South Front Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
(614) 462-7061

FARM POPULATION HAS UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS

The nation's farm population in 1982 was more likely to be white, older, married, and have lower unemployment when compared with the nonfarm population.

These are among the survey results being reported by the Commerce Department's Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

About one of every 41 People or 2.4 percent of the total population was a farm resident in 1982. The farm population registered a loss of 431,000 farm residents from 1980 to 1982.

Here are some other facts from the report:

---The farm population was 96 percent white (compared with 85 percent of the nonfarm population), 3.2 percent black, and 2.3 percent of Spanish origin.

---The farm population's median age (half older, half younger) was about 35 years compared with 30 years for nonfarm residents and for the entire nation.

---A greater proportion of farm residents were living with their spouses--70 percent of farm women were doing so compared with 54 percent of nonfarm women and 68 to 60 percent among men.

---In 1982, the farm and nonfarm populations had a similar proportion (6.5 percent) of large families (six or more persons). Traditionally, large families were more prevalent in the farm population.

---Farm families were more likely to include a married couple (93 to 81 percent,) and fewer were maintained by a female householder (4.3 to 15.7 percent.)

---Farm residents were less likely to be divorced; 1.4 percent of farm women were currently divorced compared with 7.6 percent of non farm women, and among men the figures were 2.3 and 5.6 percent.

As in all surveys, data in the report are subject to sampling variability and errors of response, including underreporting and non-reporting.

--Traverse Des Sioux Library System

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The Farmer - handout at the annual Midwest Rural Library Conference.

Profile: Friends Of The Bridgton (ME) Public Library

BY: Gertrude M. Cuddy, Secretary, Bridgton Friends

In a town of approximately 4,000 year-round residents, the Friends of the Bridgton (ME) Library is a strong resource in the support of our fine library. In its short existence of approximately five years, the Friends have successfully undertaken the following:

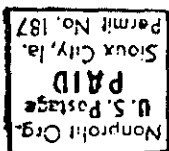
1. A \$20,000 remodeling of the unused basement of the library building into an outstanding Children's Library staffed by a permanent children's librarian.
2. Annual mini-grants to elementary school teachers for library-associated projects.
3. A commitment to underwrite the annual funding of the Children's Library book budget.
4. A \$1,000 contribution to the weatherization project to make the library more energy-efficient.
5. The purchase of a photocopier and supplies for library and public use.
6. The purchase of film strip projectors and film strips for the Children's Library.

Aside from such monetary contributions, the Friends co-sponsor an open house semi-annually at which programs interesting to the Community--musical groups, art exhibits, presentations by Maine authors--are offered. During the past winter, a twice-weekly "open house" has been offered to residents to provide a pause for refreshments with a visit to the library.

In conjunction with other groups, we successfully lobbied for retaining state funds for large print books for the visually handicapped. These funds had originally been cut from the budget.

Funds are raised in many ways: an annual community calendar; a public auction of donated items; used book sales; bake sales; the Four of the Fourth foot race with hundreds of participants (a feature of the community Fourth of July festivities); Bucks-for Books (donations of money to buy books for the Children's Library in the name of the donor); an annual \$2.00 membership fee.

-----Friends of the Library National Notebook, Fall, 1984, page 4. Friends of Libraries,
USA



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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