A HISTORY OF THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN THE MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND ITS IMPLICATION ON PRESENT AND FUTURE PLANS FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND EXTENSION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICE

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by

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INTRODUCTION

A history of the growth and development of elementary school libraries in the Minneapolis Public Schools is a patchwork of forces and personalities working singly and together to fulfill the ever demanding need for a rich and varied collection of materials to meet the individual needs and interests of children, further the development of their highest potentials, and fit them for their place in our democratic society.

Because of the complexity of this history, a purely chronological record might be confusing and tend to dissolve the role of these aforementioned forces and personalities. This paper, therefore, will attempt to develop the history by tracing a chronology of their major contributions and in so doing attempt to weave a composit of the total picture.

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THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Early Years

One of the earliest forces in the development of libraries for children and one that has been continuous throughout the years has been the Minneapolis Public Library.

On February 27, 1890, just a few months after the first public library was opened on December 16, 1889; Dr. Herbert Putnam, Librarian, established the first branch library in the basement of the North Side High School. At that time the North Side High School housed grades one through eleven. The rooms were furnished, heated, lighted and tendered rent free by the Board of Education.[1] This branch; later known as the North Branch, moved to its present location, 1834 Emerson Avenue North, in 1894.

The following statements taken from the Annual Report of the librarian present a valuable insight into the thinking of one of our pioneers in library service and his understanding of the relation of the library for the schools.

> (4) The relation of the library to the common school system demands to be systematized upon a recognized basis. (a) It is not here a question of establishing a relation; the relation already exists and cannot be escaped. Over 20 per cent of the books circulated this year were drawn by children within the school age. (b) In self-defense, therefore, libraries seek to utilize the intimate influence of the school teachers towards directing this mass of reading into proper channels. (c) And to this end, they effect a special relation with the schools, which usually embodies the following features:

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[1] Minneapolis Public Library, Annual Report 1890; Branches. p. 13.

(1) A thorough understanding between the librarian and the teachers as to what the schools need and what the library can furnish.

(2) The issue of library cards through the teachers to certain children under the 13-year limit; and the issue of books to such children only from lists approved by the teacher. The issue of a library card in such cases working as a reward for studiousness.

(3) The issue to the schools of a number of books at a time to be used for illustration in the classroom.

(4) This issue through the teachers, so far as practicable, of all library books drawn by pupils of the schools; thus enabling the teachers to keep informed of the kind and amount of outside reading done by each pupil.

How much might here be accomplished in these ways, I am not prepared to predict. It is certain, however, that in absence of any such system, the library has been, in cases, a detriment rather than an aid to the schools. Numerous instances have been reported where pupils formerly studious have been corrupted into careless disregard of their studies, by vagarious outside reading. The library can avoid furnishing vicious books,, but it cannot prevent these children from reading a book a day bearing no relation to their studies. The parents rarely take pains to prevent them. Only the cooperation of the library and the schools can do so; and it can do so not by prohibiting the unrelated reading but by stimulating an interest in reading that is related. There is, therefore, no library of our type in the United States which is not undertaking such a systematic union with the schools, and there is no part of library extention which appears to accomplish so much with so slight a proportionate expenditure, or whose results are recorded with such invaluable enthusiasm.[2]

The work with the schools, though not yet systematized, is being rapidly prepared for by the addition of multiple copies of books needed for illustration or collateral reading, and by the enlargement of the branches; and on their side, the teachers are gaining a necessary preliminary acquaintance with the reading habits of the pupils, by requiring a

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[2] Minneapolis Public Library, Annual Report 1890: Immediate Problems, No. 4, pp. 15-16.

> periodical statement of books read. The lists of books so submitted by the pupils have, I am told, improved very generally in quality during the past year.[3]

The East Side Branch, located in the old Winthrop School[4] at University and First Avenues Southeast, was opened in 1891.

> Although each of the branches had a "reading room attached, with some fifty periodicals; and several hundred volumes of miscellaneous literature for reference use," it served primarily as a delivery station. If a request were presented at the branch in the morning, the desired book would be sent from the Central Library in the afternoon by horse and wagon delivery. It was several years before the library could afford separate lending collections for each of its branches. From the beginning, books anywhere in the library system were available at any branch or station.[5]

A prelude to the present use of classroom collections[6] is found in the fourth annual report made by Dr. James K. Hosmer, the librarian who succeeded Dr. Putnam, which contains the following interesting account of sending a group of juvenile books to public schools:

> An experiment was tried in the spring of 1893 with results so successful that in my opinion a way is indicated by which the usefulness of the Library may be largely increased and its hold upon the affections of the community greatly strengthened. The cities of Cleveland, Detroit and Milwaukee, cities of about the same grade as Minneapolis, and each possessed of a well administered public library, have led the way in forming a close connection with the public schools. Collections of about seventy-five books suited to youths on the verge of manhood and womanhood are sent to the schools, those in the remote, outlying districts being served first, where they are put in charge of the principal, she becoming for the time being a library assistant. The books are issued for the most part to children of the seventh and eighth grades, following the

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[3] Minneapolis Public Library, Annual Report 1891; Concluding Remarks, p. 10.

[4] Winthrop School- erected 1867. Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Minneapolis; for the Year Ending June 30, 1880, p. 14.

[5] Minneapolis Public Library; Fifty Years of Service 1889-1939, p. 14.

[6] Classroom Collection; for definition see appendix, p. I.

> Library rules for circulation. At the end of three or four months, or at such time as the books appear to have been well read, the collection goes to some other school, being replaced by a fresh lot of books, to be distributed like the former, under the supervision of the principal... Finding among our juvenile books about one hundred and twenty-five duplicates which could be spared, I sent half to the Lowell[7] and half to the Longfellow[8] schools, schools far in the outskirts, remote from the Library and all its branches and stations, which they have little means of getting at from one year's end to the other. The benefit of the arrangement was at once apparent. The children caught at the books with enthusiasm as did also the parents at home. If the father were an old soldier, the war books of Coffin were as interesting to him as to his boy; the mother found Miss Alcott, Susan Coolidge and Mrs. Champney as interesting as they had been to her daughter. The travels of Knox and Butterworth, the historical tales of Henty, the classic stories of Church pleased old and young. Households to which the Library had been utterly strange felt for the first time an influence from it. Good was communicated; the Library was popularized in those outlying districts as it could be in no other way. Miss Jennison and Miss Sprague, principals respectively of the Lowell and Longfellow schools, testified warmly to the excellent outcome. In one way the experiment resulted in loss. In the burning of the Lowell school about one-half of its collection, which had been called in with a view to returning, was destroyed. The Library Committee felt that the departure was for the present too radical and that the plan ought now to go no further. The librarian, however, desires to express his opinion that in no other way at once so cheap and so effective can the advantages of the Library be extended and the institution itself be made to take firm hold on the heart of the public as by constituting the schools, after this plan, sub-stations, the work beginning in the remote regions of the city, leaving the central parts to be last served.[9]

The following account of further service to children in schools is taken from Dr. Hosmer's 1894 report:

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[7] See appendix, p. X.

[8] See appendix, p. X.

[9] Minneapolis Public Library, Annual Report 1893; Library and Public School, pp. 12-13.

> While the schools in the immediate neighborhood of the Central Library and the Branches are well cared for, the remote districts enjoy almost no advantages. Unless the benefits of the institution are to be limited for the most part to the knots of children fortunately located, something should be done to supply our books to the children at a distance.
>
> Miss Allen, of the Holland school,[10] and Miss Legros, of the Franklin school,[11] both schools situated at a distance from any Branch or Station, ascertained that their children knew, and could know, almost nothing of the Library. These principals inquired if it were not the case that all the people of the city, over 14 years of age were entitled to borrower's cards, and also children under that age, if suitable vouched for and guaranteed. Finding it was so, they made (each acting independently of the other) this proposition-- that cards having been obtained for some 60 or 70 pupils in each school, the principals should be allowed to draw on their responsibility that number of books from the Library taking them to their schools, there to remain two or three months, and to be issued to the card-holding children in the same way as at the Library, the principal becoming for the time being a Library assistant.
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> Miss Allen and Miss Legros having been allowed to take the books in this way, for the experiment, a happy result has come out. The books have been well cared for and made useful. The children of the Holland and Franklin schools have in this way come in, most cases for the first time, into contact with the Library, a contact quite impossible for them until the books were thus sent. Of course, no reason exists, if the Holland and Franklin schools have this privilege, why other outlying schools should not have it. A petition to that effect, indeed, has already come in from the Longfellow school which is still more remote.[12]

It might be said that the borrowing of books to be used in the schools by these two elementary principals was the forerunner of the present day classroom libraries and school library stations.

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[10] See appendix, p. X.

[11] See appendix, p. IX.

[12] Minneapolis Public Library. Annual Report 1894; Problems of Management, pp. 13-14.

The 6th annual report, 1895, reveals the following statement under the heading, Problems of Management: "As regards the considerable number of children in outlying districts of the city who are too remote from the library and all its branches[13] and stations[14] to avail themselves of its benefits, we are doing something by making eight of the more remote schools sub-stations."[15] Apparently this meant that, in addition to the sub-stations already located at Longfellow and Lowell, sub-stations were located at the following schools: Adams, Franklin, Harrison, Holland, Jackson, Monroe, Motley and Schiller.[16]

The following tables taken from the 1896, 1897, and 1898 reports list the schools which were then served by the public library:

TABLE F-- School and Juvenile Circulation
Adams School
Franklin School
Harrison School
Holland School
Jackson School
Lowell School[16]
Monroe School
Motley School
Schiller School[17]

TABLE F-- School and Juvenile Circulation
Adams School
Franklin School
Harrison School
Holland School
Horace Mann School
Jackson School

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[13]Branch; for definition see appendix, p. I.

[14]Station; for definition see appendix, p. I.

[15]Sub-station; for definition see appendix, p. I.

[16]See appendix, p. I.

[17]Minneapolis Public Library. Annual Report 1895, p. 25.

Longfellow School
Monroe School
Motley School
Rosedale School
Schiller School[18]

TABLE F-- School and Juvenile Circulation

Clay School
Franklin School
Harrison School
Holland School
Horace Mann School
Jackson School
Longfellow School
Monroe School
Motley School
Rosedale School
Schiller School
Tuttle School[19]

TABLE F-- School and Juvenile Circulation

Clay School
Corcoran School
Franklin School
Harrison School
Holland School
Horace Mann School
Jackson School
Lake Harriet School
Longfellow School
Margaret Fuller School
Monroe School
Rosedale School
Schiller School
Tuttle School
Van Cleve School[20-21]

In the 12th annual report, 1901, the Superintendent of Circulation gave this brief description of the routine of selecting and preparing books for

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[18]Minneapolis Public Library. Annual Report 1896, p. 20.

[19]Minneapolis Public Library. Annual Report 1897, p. 21.

[20]Minneapolis Public Library. Annual Report 1898, p. 20.

[21]See appendix, p. XI.

circulation in the school sub-stations: "Thirty-five public schools have been supplied with books; these are arranged in groups and graded, so that a teacher may select what best suits her needs. They may be kept eight weeks and exchanged for a new group. The work of caring for school books takes half the time of one assistant."[22]

Reports for the years of 1901 and 1903 indicate that the number of school sub-stations remained at the figure of thirty-five.

The year 1903 marks the year in which Gracia Countryman began her outstanding career as chief librarian, a career which she was to continue until her retirement in 1936. Miss Countryman's intense interest in serving children is clearly illustrated by the fact that, in the position of assistant librarian in 1872, she created what was probably the first children's room in the country by moving the children's books into a corridor of the Central Library. Miss Countryman's major interest was the distribution of library materials through every available channel.

Another pioneer in library work with children in the Minneapolis Public Library System was Miss Mabel Bartleson, Chief of the Children's Department. This statement from her 1908 Annual Report shows the forerunners of some of the present "distributing stations":[23]

> For a number of years we have sent an average of only 100 to 200 volumes to a (school) building, and have reached about thirty-five buildings. During the past year (1908) it has seemed best to change this plan and to intensify rather than scatter our energies. We have, therefore,

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[22] Twelfth Annual Report of the Minneapolis Public Library for the Year Ending December 31, 1901, p. 16.

[23] Distributing Stations; for definition see appendix, p. I.

> beginning with September, omitted those school buildings which can be served by one of the regular branches or stations, and have concentrated our efforts on ten of the most remote schools. To these, we send enough books to supply each classroom with twenty-five volumes fitted to a particular grade. Seven additional class room libraries have been sent to individual teachers, making a total of 119 class room libraries sent out since September...
>
> Regular visits to the schools are made once each month to secure the circulation records, and, in a friendly way, to discuss the needs of the teachers. In this way, the teachers are brought into contact with the library and the staff, and the children who could not otherwise use the library are able to enjoy and profit by the books provided through school rooms. It is believed that this new system has broadened our work with the schools, and laid the foundation for more intelligent and helpful relations between the library and the public school.[24]

Miss Bartelson continued to say that she regarded the work with the schools "as quite the most important part of the library's work with children, as it tended to unite the influence of the public library with that of the school, bringing to the largest number of children the pleasure and profit of good books. A systematic cooperation between the public school and the public library is urged, that the children in our city may be helped to know good books in the most efficient and least expensive way, and to realize that books for use all through their lives are offered by the public library."[25]

The following suggestions taken from Miss Countryman's annual report for 1910 indicate an early step toward the present form of library stations in elementary schools: "If the School Board would furnish rent, heat and janitor service, and the Library Board the books and expert librarian, the combination would be a most economical method of reaching many neighborhoods...

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[24] Minneapolis Public Library. Annual Report 1908, pp. 18-19.

[25] Ibid., p. 19.

It is impossible to foresee how far this cooperation would lead us from our present system of separate branch buildings, but the two methods together are likely to accomplish for many years what we wish to accomplish--the placing of good books within reach of every person."[26]

The Annual Report of the Children's Department for the year 1910 carries these interesting remarks:

> ...Collections of from 25 to 35 books, selected for each room by the children's librarian or by teachers themselves, were sent to 22 school buildings. We regard this as quite the ideal system for bringing books to children, believing that the teacher more than anyone else has the opportunity to bring the "right book to the right child at the right time." Its extension to more schools has been urged by principals and teachers, and we hope that this may be accomplished in the very near future. At present, the school department is in cramped quarters with insufficient assistance on the staff.
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> The personal work with teachers and scholars has been a feature of this department and has required a large part of the time of the children's librarian. Visits to schools made from February to May, and in September, November and December have amounted to 114 visits to 22 different schools. These personal conferences have aroused a spirit of helpfulness which makes for the ultimate good of both school and library. Throughout the year every effort on the part of the library has been met with the most cordial sympathy and help from principals and teachers, and the library greatly appreciates their enthusiastic co-operation.
>
> The chief undertaking of the year affecting this department is a graded list of the carefully selected books in the school collection now in process of preparation. There is an increasing demand for such a list and it is hoped that it may be completed during the coming year.
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> Books fitted to the needs of the locality were supplied from the school collection to the following city playgrounds and gardens: Loring Park, Blaine playgrounds and Pierce school gardens.

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[26] Minneapolis Public Library. Annual Report 1910, p.16.

> The school bulletin, giving information of special interest to teachers and including a selected list of books was issued in February, April and November, and copies sent to every teacher in the city. The February number contained a list of books for the celebration of Lincoln and Washington's birthdays; in the April number was a list of books on Arbor Day, and in the November number was given a list of Thanksgiving and Christmas stories capable of adaptation for telling. We believe that these bulletins have served a very useful purpose and have helped to increase the use of the library by principals and teachers. A comparative report of school circulation was also issued each month and sent to those schools having school libraries."[27]
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> The work with schools continues to be one of the most successful ways of reaching the children. We do not attempt in any way to furnish supplementary reading, but simply to reach the children with good readable books which they can enjoy... Books have been assigned in groups of twenty-five volumes as class room libraries, preference being given to those schools most remote from the library. Applications have also been filled from teachers whose pupils live in homes where conditions are unfortunate and a special need for the books has been felt. The total number of class room libraries in circulation was 234. The personal work with teachers and scholars has been an important part of the work of the department. Visits are made to the schools to secure the monthly circulation, which gives an opportunity for teacher and librarian to exchange in a friendly way suggestions so essential to the best use of the class room library. One hundred forty-eight visits have been made to twenty-two different schools. During the summer, the library gave the teachers the privilege of taking an unlimited number of books from the school collections to be retained during the summer vacation. A number of teachers availed themselves of the privilege, especially where there were school playgrounds or school gardens.[28]

As predicted by Miss Countryman, circulation figures indicate that the work in the schools flourished to such an extent that by 1912 Miss Hutchison was forced to devote most of her time to this area. The annual report of the Branch Department for 1912 reveals that library extension service was available in twenty-eight schools.[29]

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[27] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[28] Minneapolis Public Library. Annual Report 1911. Children's Department. p.26.

[29] Presumably this was in the form of class room libraries.

These statements were also found in the 1912 report:

> A new and interesting experiment was tried when Station 6, discontinued at the Emerson Avenue Drug Company, in April, was re-opened in a small room in the Bremer School Building. The principal's secretary is in charge and the station is open from 9:00 A.M. until 5:30 P.M. This is not a branch library, but as a station it is doing a much finer work than was possible in the drug store.
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> A few years ago our stations were all in drug stores. Today they are in schools, a dry goods store, a real estate office... If we continue to put stations in school buildings and have persons in charge of them who give their whole time to the work, the quality of our station circulation is certain to improve.[30]

In this same year the Schiller School Station was placed under the care of the Logan Park Branch, the Bremer School Station under the North Side Branch, and the Sidney Pratt under Pillsbury Branch.

The following excerpts from the report of 1913 reveal that the growth of library work with schools was rapid:

> The work with the schools consumes the most of Miss Kerfoot's time. Visits are made to the schools through the school year, for consultation and co-operative work with the teachers. The number of library books in the schools amounts to 6,309 volumes, divided into classroom libraries of about 25 volumes each. These are placed in schools which are at some distance from any library branch.
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> A graded list of books for the assistance of parents and teachers has been under preparation for some time and is now completed and ready for the printer.
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> We are reaching the children in outlying schools through classroom libraries. There are 278 of these libraries in 33 different buildings. Stations of the library have been placed in the Johnson School in South Minneapolis, the Schiller School in Northeast Minneapolis, the Sidney Pratt School in Prospect Park, and the Bremer School in North Minneapolis. Other schools will doubtless serve as stations in the future when the Board of Education can spare the necessary space. A regular branch with reading rooms is maintained in the Seward School.[31]

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[30] A History of Public Library Service in Elementary Schools, p. 4.

[31] Minneapolis Public Library, Annual Report 1913. Children's Department, p.

In the 1914 report the Head of the Branch Department had this to say:

> The library stations established in schools have always been unusually successful, as they are under the care of an attendant who devotes her entire time to the work and naturally under such conditions the results would be far better than in a drug store station where the library books were largely used as a means of advertising and bringing the people to the store. The greatest difficulty we have encountered in our school stations is to get the older people to understand that the library belongs to them, in fact, is established for the use of the entire neighborhood and not merely for the school pupils. But we reach the parents through the children, as usually an extra book or a magazine is carried home for father or mother or some older member of the family.[32]

Circulation figures for 1914 indicate stations in four schools: Bremer, Johnson, Pratt and Schiller.

The following quotation from the librarian's report for 1915 touches upon the growing awareness of the value of a more close cooperation between the library and the public schools in book service to children:

> The School Board is now taking the library work into account and is planning in each new school building a special room with an outside entrance to be used for public library work. How far this is going to serve the general public and obviate the necessity of building separate library buildings remains to be seen. It would seem to be a step in the direction of school social centers so generally advocated.
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> So far it has been our experience that the adults do not use the school stations as freely as they do the regular branches. However, if these school stations did nothing more than serve the school children, they are worth much more than their cost.
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> There are certain things in the way of story telling, club work, lectures, quiet study rooms, commodious quarters for newspapers and periodicals and general reference work that cannot be provided in the small rooms set apart in the school buildings. Library work has become so much larger a thing than just handing out books to people who inquire for them, that it needs for its fullest and best development more spacious quarters than the school authorities can spare. Since there is no money now available for building more branch libraries, it would seem wisest to test fully the possibilities of the school branch and co-operate just as closely as possible with the school administration.[33]

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[32] A History of Public Library Service in Elementary Schools, p. 4.

[33] Minneapolis Public Library. Annual Report 1915. School Stations, pp. 18-19

The 1915 report further reveals that 378 class room libraries had been sent to forty-three public schools during the year.

> On January 11, 1915, a new station supplied with a collection of five hundred juvenile and adult books and magazines was established at the William Penn School. Heretofore, this part of the city had been furnished only by the school classroom libraries for the children, therefore, the idea of a library for everyone was gladly welcomed by the school and the neighborhood...[34]

The 1915 report also contains this statement:

> The small allowance for books has seriously restricted the service of the department. As our schools' shelves were left empty it was not possible to take care of the needs of teachers and children. The number of sets sent to the lower grades is much bigger than those in the upper grades and the supply of little children's books is always exhausted. We have a long list of first and second grade teachers and several entire schools now waiting for classroom collections.[35]

Visits to schools having classroom libraries were continued and proved very helpful in book selection for various localities.

Reports for the year 1916 include several significant happenings:

The Bremer School Station became a regular branch. The report stated that, "This branch was established as a school deposit station in 1910, but in 1917 was given a basement classroom with a separate entrance."[36]

School Department Established

Library work with schools had reached such proportions that a new department, the School Department, was established with Miss Bartleson, who had been head of the Children's Department for several years, as its head. The six school stations which had been under the care of the various branch libraries were now placed under the direction of the new department.

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[34] A History of Public Library Service in Elementary Schools, p. 5.

[35] Minneapolis Public Library. Service to Elementary Schools, p. 9.

[36] A History of Public Library Service in Elementary Schools, p. 5.