

DREISER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

OF THE INTERNATIONAL DREISER SOCIETY

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News from the American Literature Association Conference May 28-30, 1993, Baltimore, Maryland

International Dreiser Society Business Meeting

The business meeting, held on Saturday, 29 May, at 4:00 p.m., began with some announcements: most importantly that Larry Hussman will become President of the Society, despite the fact that he received a much-coveted Fulbright and will be travelling to Poland. We went over the slate of new officers organized by the nominating committee (Donald Pizer, Philip Gerber, Kiyohiko Murayama). The slate was as follows: Vice President: Philip Gerber, SUNY Brockport; Recording Secretary: Leonard Cassuto, Fordham; Directors-at-Large: Paul Orlov, Pennsylvania State (Delaware County Campus); and James L. W. West, III, Pennsylvania State. The slate was approved and the vote was unanimous. Paul Orlov deeply regretted not being able to attend the meeting. (He was suddenly sent to Slovakia on behalf of his university.) The newest member of our Advisory Board, Renate Bardeleben, University of Mainz, Germany, was unable to attend because of a death in her family. Phil Gerber, Jeganatha Raja, Kiyohiko Murayama, and Mary Lawlor also informed me that they would not be able to attend. Richard Lehan, recovering from successful surgery, sends his greetings to all.

The dates of the next ALA Conference are 3 June-5 June 1994 at the Bahia in San Diego. The program for the Dreiser session(s) must be in the hands of the ALA program director no later than 15 January 1994. We will be hearing from Phil Gerber in regard to the new call for papers. There was also a treasurer's report by Fred Rusch. The Society is doing splendidly with a membership of approximately sixty-five.

I also announced that the Executive Board of the Dreiser Society had just met to form a new editorial board for *Dreiser Studies*. We will announce the board members at a later date.

Also at the meeting, Larry Hussman discussed the possibility of holding a symposium in honor of Dreiser. A motion was made that I should become a permanent member of the advisory board in gratitude for my involvement in founding the Society.

Miriam Gogol

Session One:
 "Women on Dreiser"

The session on "Women on Dreiser" at this year's ALA Conference examined Theodore Dreiser's work from a variety of approaches, including psychoanalytic, feminist, and socio-economic readings, while covering a wide range of Dreiser's canonical fiction.

Interweaving Dreiser studies with gender studies and psychoanalysis, Miriam Gogol (University of Hartford) focused on Dreiser's recurring motif of shame in a paper entitled "'That Oldest Boy Don't Wanta Be Here': Fathers and Sons and the Dynamics of Shame in Theodore Dreiser's Early and Mid Novels." Gogol's approach proposes to analyze how Dreiser, coming from a "shame-bound family," translates this experience in an exploration of the psychological dynamics of shame in his fiction. Drawing on family-systems theory (including Helen Block-Lewis, Murray Bowen and Michael Kerr), Gogol focuses her analysis on two key scenes: the public shaming of Clyde Griffiths in the opening pages of *An American Tragedy*, as well as the shaming scenes in *Jennie Gerhardt* (in the expanded University of Pennsylvania Edition). Showing how the families became enmeshed in shame, Gogol's paper raises new questions for further exploration, such as: How do the dynamics of shame (perpetuated in lineage from father to son) shape the constructions of masculinity in Dreiser's fiction? What role does the mother (e.g. Elvira Griffiths) play in the family dynamics of shame? And thirdly, to what extent can we read this masculine lineage of shame as Dreiser's psychological expression of a deeply felt "crisis of masculinity"?

Like Miriam Gogol's, Nancy Warner Barrineau's paper is devoted to gender studies, but it explores more specifically feminine issues, as the title suggests: "'Housekeeping Ain't No Joke': Domestic Labor in *Jennie Gerhardt*." Focusing on the intersection of class and gender in her exploration of housework, Barrineau (Pembroke State University) proposes a feminist re-reading of *Jennie Gerhardt*, arguing that the novel presents a

"radical text" because of Dreiser's focus on domestic labor, which was perceived at the time as "tainted work." Drawing on a wide range of historical and feminist studies, Barrineau situates *Jennie Gerhardt* in the midst of the turn-of-the-century debate over the economic nature of housework: while domestic work had no real category in a growing market economy, it was exposed by contemporary feminists as "real, backbreaking work," whose lack of status and reward exploited women. In her revisionary reading of the novel, Barrineau concludes that "driven by his intense psychic identification with Mrs. Gerhardt and Jennie (his mother and his sister, after all), [Dreiser] paused, not merely to imagine, but to *become* the women who performed backbreaking domestic labor for themselves and others." (All quotations are drawn from the papers submitted to Lawrence Hussman.) This revisionary slant and the identification of a feminist subtext in *Jennie Gerhardt* is a fascinating new reading of the novel. And yet, it also produces new silences, glossing over the anti-feminist elements in the novel, the fact that Jennie has no voice, is endowed with the ambivalent strengths of stereotypical femininity, and emerges as a victimized figure of pathos. Barrineau's paper thus paves the way for further explorations of key questions, such as: To what extent is *Jennie Gerhardt*'s feminist commitment undermined by its celebration of those female attributes that constitute a conforming femininity "for man"?

In "The Financier's 'Subtle' World: Dreiser, Veblen, and the Immaterial World of Business," Clare Eby (University of Connecticut, Hartford) turns her attention to Frank Cowperwood, tracing the parallels between Dreiser and Thorstein Veblen. It is this comparative analysis that presents the core and strength of this paper: Eby, for example, establishes an interesting connection between Cowperwood's financial manipulations and Veblen's concept of "the businessman's psychological phenomena," such as "good will," "personal credit," or "immaterial wealth." Eby's proposed argument, however, is perhaps a little too obviously a "straw argument," as the following

sentence illustrates: "The insistence of many critics that literary representations of business should limit themselves to what have been called 'documentary' and 'mundane detail' [Michael Spindler and Donald Pizer] has kept them from seeing the immaterial world of business." Rather than simply accusing some earlier readers of blindness, Eby's argument might more productively engage in a critical dialogue with a scholar *who has done* pioneering work in this area, such as Walter Benn Michaels, whose approach highlights, like Eby's, Cowperwood's "immaterial world of business."

What I find exciting is that all three papers present new directions to Dreiser research and will undoubtedly stimulate further discussion and debates amongst Dreiser scholars. Lastly, I would like to thank Larry Hussman for organizing the session and for reading Nancy Warner Barrineau's paper.

Irene Gammel
McMasters University

Session Two:

"New Voices In Dreiser Criticism"

The second of the Dreiser sessions featured work by graduate students from across the country, all of whom are engaged in analyzing what have often been seen by earlier readers as inconsistencies in Dreiser's narrative tone and attitude toward his subjects. In "The Dialectic of Irony: Structural and Thematic Considerations in *An American Tragedy*," Roark Mulligan (University of Oregon) focuses on what he calls the "playful dramatic irony" in the novel, which "sympathetically views individual human action as of preeminent importance but that removes us to a distanced ironic perspective." This "contrast of satire and sympathy," he says, creates a "dialectic play of discourses" that adds to the complexity of Dreiser's portrayal of Clyde and his world. Scott Zaluda (CUNY, Queens College) is interested in "Secrets of Fraternity: Men and Friendship in *Sister Carrie*." The tension in the novel, he says, involves the relationship of inclusion/exclusion between those societies and the outside world, in which the "plural or multiple" nature of the city

creates "a sort of irony which disrupts secret order distinctions." *Sister Carrie*, he says, creates "a model of interpenetrating circles with continually problematic associations ... between the conspicuous, performing inner circle and the invisible outside world, which, in circumscribing it, creates its circularity." Feminist readings of *Jennie Gerhardt* constituted the rest of panel. Margaret Vasey (Kent State), in "*Jennie Gerhardt*: Gender, Identity, and Power," argues that, "through Jennie, Dreiser suggests that, within society's circumscribed power structure, sacrifice, passivity and desirability are almost compulsory in women" and that the novel "provides the reader with the perspective of a singular society that is a reflection of the culturally assigned patterns of gender identity for women and men of 19th century America." In "*Jennie Gerhardt*: A Daughteronomy of Desire," Kathy Frederickson (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) argues that Jenny "embodies and encodes the dutiful ideal daughter," who consequently "cannot escape the exchange value she embodies in a patriarchal society."

Caren J. Town
Georgia Southern University

News and Notes

Caren J. Town (Georgia Southern University) is soliciting essays for a panel on "New Approaches to American Literary Naturalism," to be held at the 1994 NEMLA Convention in Pittsburgh in early April. The deadline is September 15, 1993.

Larry Hussman is in the process of organizing a Dreiser Conference to be held around Dreiser's birthday in August 1996. Possible locations being considered are Terre Haute; Dayton (Wright State); Chicago; Marina del Rey (L.A.); and Big Moose Lake (upstate New York). You may contact Larry about your preference of location or other matters at:

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Dreiser and Libraries

by Daniel Traister

The following article is reprinted from the December 1991 *PACSLnews* (Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries) by permission of the author, who is Curator of Reader Services at the Van Pelt Library. Changes requested by the author have been incorporated.

Theodore Dreiser's concern to preserve his literary and personal archive and his library is well known. The Theodore Dreiser Papers, held in the Department of Special Collections at the University of Pennsylvania's Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center, testify to Dreiser's decision, reached in concert with his friend H.L. Mencken, about the value of preserving the paper evidence of their lives and works. Their concern led them to seek libraries to which to give their surviving papers (of which they both had many!). Mencken's went to The Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore and to The New York Public Library. Dreiser's came to Penn.

The presence of the Dreiser collection at Penn therefore also testifies to Dreiser's opinion about the merits of libraries. Whatever else he may have felt about them—and this is a topic that will be explored in more detail, and in Dreiser's own words, below—he saw libraries as places where such paper remains would be preserved and could be studied. In part because he knew full well how his works had been treated prior to their publication, he wanted them to survive in their original forms. He hoped that his works might eventually appear as he had originally written them. Dreiser may have wanted to enhance the work of future students and scholars, as was surely the primary concern of the people who acquired his literary and personal papers for Penn. Much more importantly, however, he wanted to enrich the lives of his readers with versions of his works that more accurately reflected his authorial intentions than the versions already published had been able to do, whenever it became possible for those original versions to be published.

In an important way, Dreiser's hopes and his confidence have already been justified, even

though the "modern era" of Dreiser studies remains in a relatively early stage of its development. That era is rooted in study of the materials now emerging from The Theodore Dreiser Papers at Penn. The Pennsylvania Edition of the Works of Theodore Dreiser is a publication project originally created to edit *Sister Carrie*. Since *Carrie's* appearance in 1981, however, it has expanded into formal and long-term existence as a publication project whose goal is to see Dreiser's major works into print in newly-edited editions. These new editions will be based on comparison of the surviving manuscript evidence against the evidence provided by the (often emasculated) texts published during Dreiser's lifetime. On this basis, the Edition has continued to publish since *Carrie* appeared.

In the mid-1980s, under the leadership of then Director of Libraries Richard De Gennaro, The Pennsylvania Edition was reorganized, taking the shape it continues to bear today. The Edition was cooperatively created by the Library, as physical repository for the Dreiser Papers; an Editorial Committee, chaired by University of Connecticut Professor of English Thomas P. Riggio as General Editor; a reconstituted Dreiser Committee, chaired by the Director of Libraries; and the University of Pennsylvania Press, directed by Thomas M. Rotell, all supported by then University Provost, Thomas Ehrlich. The venture was intended to insure continued progress of Dreiser publications drawing on the Library's great Dreiser resources by organizing and planning for the Edition's future development. The current Vice Provost and Director of Libraries, Paul H. Mosher, has reaffirmed Library commitment to the progress of the Edition.

The Edition has compiled an enviable track record in a relatively few years. Since reorganization of the project, the Press has published Dreiser's *American Diaries, 1902-1926* (1982), *An Amateur Laborer* (1983), and volume one of his *Journalism* (1988). *Newspaper Days*, an autobiographical volume that was much cut and bowdlerized in its original appearance, has been published, newly edited by Iowa scholar Theodore Nostwich. *Jennie Gerhardt* has also been published. Other volumes are in advanced stages

of preparation. Relatedly, General Editor Thomas P. Riggio's own edition of the *Dreiser-Mencken Letters: The Correspondence of Theodore Dreiser and H.L. Mencken, 1907-1945*, appeared in 1986. But as long ago as 1948, a bare six years after the Papers started to arrive in Philadelphia, Robert Elias's biography, *Theodore Dreiser: Apostle of Nature*, was already reliant on the Dreiser collection at Penn. Dreiser and the University had reached agreement about his gift in 1942, and the Papers started to flow to Penn immediately. Following Dreiser's death at the end of 1945, more materials were added, sent by his widow, Helen Dreiser, in 1946 and 1948. Much more was purchased from Mrs. Dreiser in 1949; in 1952, she made a final donation of Dreiser's unpublished "Philosophical Notes." Still more materials have been added since 1952.

An early Dreiser Committee oversaw the collection's growth and use. This Committee was led by American Civilization Professors E. Sculley Bradley and Robert E. Spiller, who saw such literary manuscripts as a research resource that would be recognizable as such by practitioners of older, better established disciplines such as English and Classics, and thus help to establish American civilization on comparable footing with the University. Later, library personnel, notably Dr. Neda M. Westlake, Curator of Manuscripts, took on major responsibility for the collection. Dr. Westlake, a graduate student in the American Civilization program, started out as a student assistant checking in Dreiser materials as they arrived. Over the years, immersed in and fascinated by Dreiser, she became one of the foremost Dreiser experts in the country. An indispensable guide to scholars using the collection, and a proponent of and early participant in the editorial project that resulted in *Carrie's* appearance, she continues, since her retirement from the Library in 1984, to be an active member of the Dreiser Committee.

At Penn, the Dreiser Papers now occupy approximately 480 linear feet of shelf space (think of it as goalpost to goalpost and a bit more than halfway back again). They contain personal and literary papers from about 1895 through 1950. Letters to and from Dreiser, some in carbon copies

of original correspondence; letters from his widow, Helen; manuscripts, typescripts, galleys, and proofs of his published works as well as unpublished manuscripts; newspaper and journal articles, poems, short stories, essays, and lectures; plays and movie scripts based on Dreiser's works (who can forget Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift in the 1951 movie *A Place in the Sun*, based on *An American Tragedy*?); notes and diaries, including records of his travels to the Soviet Union in the 1930s: all these, together with full representation of Dreiser in print, photographs, portraits of him and of Helen, articles of furniture, his walking stick — even his bow ties — constitute an unparalleled resource for students and scholars interested in one of the great transformative voices of twentieth-century American literature.

Dreiser's personal library is among the constituents of Dreiser's collection that Penn preserves. Assisted by funding obtained through the grant made to PACSCL by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the staff will make his library generally available to scholars for the first time. Until now, internal and inconsistent records have been all that scholars could use to find materials in Dreiser's library. The library is a record of at least some of Dreiser's reading (although it is, of course, not always certain that he read all of the books he owned!). In addition, it records some of his literary relationships from a perspective that supplements what his correspondence also reveals. For example, Edward Dahlberg's *Those Who Perish* (New York: John Day, 1937) is inscribed by its author as follows: "For Theodore Dreiser, the greatest American writer since Herman Melville — with homage & affection. Your friend, Edward Dahlberg, N.Y.C. Dec. 2, '37." Dahlberg, an important American realist and writer who himself awaits rediscovery, is one of Dreiser's correspondents. An inscription such as this one offers additional evidence about his attitudes toward Dreiser's apparently substantial literary influence and personal presence. Finding such books and such evidence more easily than they can be found at present will enable scholars to learn something about Dreiser — and about writers like Dahlberg, for whom he may have been a significant factor in their creative lives.

Even before the grant to PACSCL, an NEH grant-funded project had begun to provide online access to and improved cataloging of Dreiser's manuscripts. This project, directed by manuscripts librarian Dr. Nancy Shawcross and implemented in conjunction with project staff Lee Ann Draud and Julie Reahard, has successfully seen to the addition of detailed Dreiser manuscript records both to RILIN and local online databases. Better access will have a wide impact on the use — already brisk— to which the collection is put.

Apart from the Edition, biographies additional to Robert Elias's of 1948 — such as those by W.A. Swanberg and Richard Lingeman — and a variety of literary historical and critical studies continue to emanate from the collection. These have themselves sometimes proved to be an occasion for the addition of new materials for the use of subsequent Dreiser specialists. For example, Mr. Swanberg gave the Library materials he had gathered in the course of working on his biography, *Dreiser* (1965). A public television station used the collection for its 1988 documentary on the murder trial of Chester Gillette, the basis of *An American Tragedy*; a tape of that documentary is now held by the Library too.

The extensive correspondence Dreiser maintained with his contemporaries and the wide variety of his interests has attracted many students and scholars working on other authors, and even on non-literary topics, to use the collection. Dreiser's correspondents (other than Mencken) include (but are by no means limited to): Louis Adamic, Conrad Aiken, Sherwood Anderson, William Rose Benet, Randolph Bourne, Pearl Buck, Witter Bynner, Erskine Caldwell, Clarence Darrow, Eugene Debs, Floyd Dell, John Dewey, John Dos Passos, Max Eastman, Hamlin Garland, Dashiell Hammett, Ben Hecht, Fannie Hurst, Ring Lardner, Sinclair Lewis, Edgar Lee Masters, Henry Miller, George Jean Nathan, Clifford Odets, Eugene O'Neill, Ezra Pound, Elmer Rice, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Carl Sandburg, William Saroyan, Robert Sherwood, Upton Sinclair, Lincoln Steffens, John Steinbeck, Carl Van Vechten, and Edmund Wilson. Researchers studying early Soviet-American relations; Harlan

County, Kentucky, coal mining and labor strife; American literary naturalism and modernism; the interrelationships between journalism and literature; the American literary Left; and the impact of science, psychology, and philosophy on modern literature — to cite only some obvious examples — all find material in the Dreiser Papers to support their studies. Dreiser's breadth of interests and range of correspondence will assist similar and other studies for decades to come.

It would be nice to suppose that Dreiser could have foreseen the many uses to which his Papers have been put (and will continue to be put as time reveals still more of their value to scholars). But this seems highly unlikely. Dreiser was a writer, not a scholar. His interests are not always congruent with the interests of those who put his manuscripts to work. Clearly, he was most concerned with providing for his posthumous literary reputation. He wanted to make it possible for his works someday to appear as he had written them, not as they were allowed to appear in a period far more prudish and far more censorious than ours. From this point of view, the editorial work that his collection has permitted would have pleased him enormously.

Newspaper Days presents readers with about a third more of the text of this book than Dreiser was originally able to publish. Lying in wait — perhaps one should say lurking in wait — is a manuscript text of *An American Tragedy* almost four times as long as the quarter-of-a-million words, two-volume novel — itself no slouch in the length department — first published in 1926.

When the Pennsylvania Edition of *Sister Carrie* appeared in 1981, so extensive were the differences between the texts of the 1900 Doubleday, Page and the 1981 University of Pennsylvania Press editions that *The New York Times* found the book, in this second incarnation, worthy of notice not only in its *Book Review* but also on the front page of its daily news section (April 17, 1981). The restoration of some 36,000 words to Dreiser's 1900 novel in the Pennsylvania text was significant, according to reporter Herbert Mitgang, because "no work of such historical repute that has been accepted and acclaimed by

generations of students in English courses as well as by general readers has ever been republished with such major changes" (p. A1). Characters, motivations, personalities, and Carrie's sexual nature: all were redefined by the text now for the first time made available to a general and scholarly readership. The Pennsylvania Edition, since reissued in a mass market Penguin paperback used as a classroom textbook, has come close to replacing the older *Carrie* altogether. The existence of two *Carries* — one the version that entered American literary history when it was published in 1900, the other the version that Dreiser "intended" to appear but which did not appear until edited for the Pennsylvania Edition in the late 1970s and early 1980s — is the occasion for new consideration of the nature of this literary text specifically and of literary texts generally.

So extensive are Dreiser's literary remains, and so extensive the differences in all of his works between their written and published forms, that Dreiser — the first modern author to be edited whose textual remains are as complex — is in one sense almost as busy after his death as he was while he was alive. His multiple texts raise a host of questions which he could not have imagined when he decided to send his papers for preservation, study, and eventual publication to Penn's Library.

Yet Dreiser had thought about libraries. He might not have thought about them in ways that reflect what has actually happened to him now that the bulk of his work is preserved on pieces of paper, some bound, some not, in libraries. Nonetheless, he thought about libraries in ways that reflect his experience as a long-time — and highly aware, highly critical — library user, and documentary evidence survives to demonstrate that he did so. Dreiser was concerned with libraries as institutions, the services they render and the goals they ought to maintain. The surviving evidence makes it almost surprising that Dreiser eventually gave his literary and personal remains to any library: his criticisms are severe. But they reflect the viewpoint of a persistent library user, a person who fundamentally loves the institution he criticizes, and who criticizes it as severely as he does in high hopes that he will make it better.

In 1934, in the depths of the Depression, the New York Library Association sought responses from a number of prominent figures to a questionnaire about library services. Dreiser's full response, previously unpublished, survives in the Theodore Dreiser Papers; I am indebted to Professor Tomas P. Riggio for first drawing it to my attention. Writing from New York's Hotel Ansonia on June 13, 1934, to Frank L. Tolman of the New York Library Association, Dreiser's secretary says,

Here, at long last, are the replies to the questions you asked of Mr. Dreiser [He] asks me to point out to you that he realizes that this statement does not cover the ground as adequately as he could wish; a really complete reply would be the work of months. But ... [he] wishes you to know that he fully appreciates the magnitude and importance of the subject, and really regrets that he cannot spare the time to go into it more fully.

This cover note may sound as if the recipient is about to receive a polite brushoff. Far from it: the reply that accompanies this letter is a ten-page document, clearly composed in a sort of barely-controlled passion, sometimes even anger. Its writer does "fully appreciate ... the magnitude and importance of the subject"; his reply is characteristic of its author in style and attitude and clearly indicates that he has thought about what libraries do that matters to him.

The reply reflects Dreiser's political views, driven by the Depression further toward a radical critique of American public life than had hitherto been true even in work that was already quite critical of American life. It also reflects an idealized view of what the service orientation of libraries ought to be. That view is, perhaps unsurprisingly, in agreement with much of the historical genius of American librarianship, which has come to emphasize service in ways not always anticipated by English or continental models. In certain other respects, however, Dreiser disdains resources we would consider scholarly necessities for research collections. Modern readers are unlikely to share all of the attitudes expressed in his reply. Unhappily, however, in many respects

the document still rings true for its readers in the 1990s. Some things have changed less than we might have supposed, or hoped, and the causes that gave rise to Dreiser's anger — especially at the end of his reply — remain issues for us to contend with, too. An uncomfortably contemporaneous air characterizes a good deal of this response — as it characterizes, also, a good deal of the literature for which Dreiser remains best known.

Never before published in its entirety, so far as I am aware, Dreiser's reply is here presented in a form that corrects none but the most obvious of its errors. I reproduced Dreiser's text as it appears, including his own marginal second thoughts or corrections to his typist's errors. I have made one minor deletion of a reference incomprehensible without additional context. I use brackets [] to indicate my alterations and an ellipsis ... to indicate my one brief deletion. Dreiser's text is printed with permission of The Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, holders of the library rights to Dreiser's unpublished manuscripts.

Reply by Theodore Dreiser to questions contained in letter dated April 16, 1934, from Frank L. Tolman, New York Library Association.

I want first, before replying to the various questions, to make it plain, not casually, but very strongly, that in any reference to the personnel of libraries I have occasion [to] mention, I have no desire to attack the little employe[e] — the day-by-day worker who is between the Scylla of the organization he depends on for his job, and the Charybdis of public attitude, so frequently of dissatisfaction, towards its libraries. The small employee is simply the unfortunate who may, and very likely has, the most pointed and constructive criticism to make of the system, but who cannot protest without fear of unpleasant reaction or even the loss of his livelihood. He (and she, of course) is thus compelled to reflect as well as, in time, to absorb the attitude of his superiors, unwilling as he may personally be to do this.

Nor do I, in any case, refer to the very few

extraordinary persons, met with in library work now and then, who so cordially, out of their own personalities and experience, meet the needs of the public on the most equitable basis, with such imagination, such willing service and such freedom from pedantic mist that it can by no means be described by the limited words courtesy and intelligence. It is more than that, much. Having said this:

In reply to the first question: What are the chief shortcomings in the libraries you know? The same shortcomings as affect and afflict any large corporation or organization. Stupid regimentation; the work of the employe[e]s so obviously set out for them in a list of stereotyped rules and regulations which constitute the only equipment allowed them, regardless of their own abilities, to meet the public and care for its needs. Limitations of service which so clearly indicate a withdrawal of one function to permit the continuation of another less important. I give two instances; I could give many: My secretary had occasion to telephone to the Central Circulation room of the 42nd Street Library to request a bit of information which involved no more on the part of the clerk or librarian than a reference to one figure in the card index, and a repetition of this figure over the telephone. A trivial service, yet the information involved was extremely and urgently important to me in connection with a legal case. My secretary was informed that this service could not be given at that hour; a rule specified that this could not be done after twelve o'clock noon. It was necessary to consume more than two hours of time to go to the library in person to secure the information.

I understand that the services of the reference room at 42nd Street are not open to students. I saw one young man present a slip for a book; he was told by the clerk at the information desk that he would have to get this at "his school branch". The young man said, "How do you know I am a student?" The clerk replied, "I think that is beside the point," and refused to o.k. the slip. Outside of the obvious stupidity of denying service to students, it occurs to any fair-minded person to inquire just how, in the ordinary course of life, one could be prepared to prove that he is not a student, and by just what superior

omniscience the clerk is supported in his deductions.

In other words, rules, not service. Evidence of limitations of important functions to the exclusion of others less important since, as I know, one can borrow, in this same library, a copy of the latest detective or mystery novel or the latest English novel following the by-this-time classic and wearisome pattern of such things — the curates, the teas, the tennis and the Oxford young men.

But in other respects, particularly with regard to serious reference books, collections are extremely inadequate. I have counted twelve persons waiting to consult the single copy of the latest New York City Directory in the 42nd Street reference room. Few economic reports are better than two years old. The newspaper room is far too small for its patronage; one can rarely get a seat there. And yet it is obviously impossible to consult the huge and heavily bound newspaper files without being seated. Compare with this, though, the third floor of the 42nd Street building. At least three spacious rooms given over to an art collection, which I have never seen more than ten persons inspecting at one time. I maintain that an art collection has no place in a library as important as the 42nd Street Library, while conditions relating to its real functions are so desperately limited.

Question No. 2: What kinds of books can libraries properly disregard? Part of my reply to this lies above, in connection with books which are so dull and unimportant to the present scene.... I fail utterly to understand the importance of work of this sort. There is, of course, necessity for circulating books which would be of assistance to persons studying a foreign language, or studying any important phase of foreign culture, history, etc. But what value lies in the inclusion of 7,000 Hungarian books in an American library system when, so obviously, this is to the exclusion of 7,000 books which would be read and appreciated by Americans? I am far from contending that the book needs of the foreign population of a city like New York can be totally ignored, but when these are, on the contrary, so greatly emphasized and satisfied as to result in an item like this, it seems to

me that there is definite lack of proper perspective somewhere.

Question 3: How can public library service best be extended to reach the million and more rural people of New York State now deprived of this necessity? I have read recently of a library truck, specially built for books[,] which carried library facilities into the outlying sections of New York City. I can appreciate that the original cost of these trucks must be high, but I cannot see that the operation of them should be vastly expensive, and, with proper care, they should last indefinitely. Why not an extension of that service? Or, why not library books in rural schools, under the supervision of the principal or trustees[?] Surely most schools could provide a little [room] for a service like that. Or even, in far rural sections, a monthly selection of books sent to such a school by mail or express, the population having indicated choices and needs. This would, of course, need strict supervision by some school official or teacher to guard against damage to or loss of books, but it should not involve great expense. I understand, of course, that a service of this kind does not by any means constitute a library, yet it might very well prove enlightening and challenging enough to foster a local spirit which would demand and get real library advantages.

Question #4: What essential characteristics or special training do librarians generally lack? An apprehension of the fact that books in libraries are intended for consultation by or circulation among the public, and not as prizes for whose temporary possession the public must be prepared to do battle against an attitude of challenging suspicion. And where would this attitude, when it is evident on the part of employe[e]s, come from if it did not percolate down from a clam-like outlook at the top?

Question #5: How can library service be enriched to meet the vastly increasing demands of the people using libraries? It is my understanding that public libraries are practically forced, by certain rules, to accept gifts of books and to keep them on hand or in circulation regardless of the fact that they might be considered totally unsuitable. I can readily understand that this provision would result in some gifts made for no

purpose other than the satisfaction of exhibitionist tendencies by persons who wish to see their names, as donors, on index cards. I should think that the first step toward the efficient working of what I am about to suggest is a revision of this rule so that only suitable books need be accepted. Then, to secure such books, why not a public appeal — perhaps a postal card mailed to each cardholder; a small advertisement yearly or semi-yearly in some newspaper. I am convinced, from my inquiries outside, that relatively few persons know that libraries welcome gifts of books. They read of some prominent person whose books are willed to a library, but they do not realize that they themselves possess volumes which would be acceptable at any time and which they would be glad to give. However, it seems essential first, for some limitation to be placed on the type of books, or it is obvious that an inpouring of trash would obliterate the value of gifts.

To approach this from another angle, I should say that the public has taken its libraries too much for granted, and the libraries have taken the public too much for granted. As to the latter, any library employe[e] will assure you that the public mutilates books, destroys them, loses them. Undeniably this is true. Yet I think it is true because the public in general fails to look upon these books as its own property — things for which they have paid, in part, by taxes. And the libraries have done little to enlighten them. They have made what are intended to [be] stringent rules as to fines, etc., and have displayed signs on the subject. Yet the trouble continues. Why not an exhibition, changed monthly, of mutilated books, each bearing a card reading: "This book was mutilated by John Doe of 5 East 5th Street, New York. He paid a fine of \$3.00. Because he mutilated this book, you are deprived of its use until it can be repaired or replaced." And a list of those persons who have carelessly lost books, their names and addresses, and the fines paid. A thing like this (and it would not have to continue very long) could and would point out to the onlooker that his books not "the library's" books have been harmed. In other words, a complete reversal of the narrow and almost secretive philosophy which now seems to motivate or, rather, to deter, the

library system. Other angles of this particular matter have been suggested in my replies to other questions.

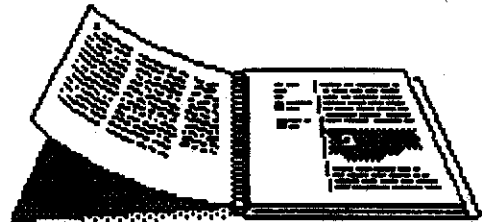
Question #6: How can public libraries obtain sufficient support to enable them to meet their new obligations and opportunities? I am not familiar, except in a general way, with the manner in which libraries obtain their funds, nor in what proportions they are distributed throughout various departments. I resent this gap in my knowledge. I am informed daily, in the screaming press, of the needs, and of their fulfillment, of charities, churches, of museums, of zoological gardens, of public utilities, of every conceivable kind of institution — except the public libraries. I cannot ever recall having seen an appeal by anyone (except occasionally a letter to an editor) to assist in the passage of this bill or that proposal to assist the library system. Nothing at all on which to base a judgment one way or the other. No important statements, no indignant denials (honest or dishonest)[,] no evidence of a fight for or against, nothing which would be incentive to an individual to investigate the facts for himself and assist him in forming an opinion. In other words, no foment, no discussion. Occasionally a little very bland and mild publicity, an article or two on the service given (so rare that it needs publicity, probably) or excuses for lack of service because of "lack of funds". Never because of lack of economy, good judgment, brains, initiative. But has there ever been an honest investigation of the system by an honestly interested and public spirited newspaper; any scathing criticism in the press of shortcomings of the library system? No. I have, for at least the past fifteen years, had occasion to visit monthly, weekly, sometimes daily, the library at 42nd Street or numerous branches in all parts of the city. "As they were in the beginning", so they are now — except only that they are a little more worn, a little more tired, a little more smug, less up to date, far more cautious, more withdrawn, less serviceable. There is no evidence of any new ideas, new methods, experiment, interesting or economical innovation. Just recently I had occasion [sic!] to become informed as to the disposition by publishers of "sheets" — i.e., books in their initial stages, not folded, cut, nor bound in any way,

merely printed. I am informed that sheets, when they are left over with a publisher, for this reason or that, are so worthless that they are not even sold as waste paper because for this disposition they would have to be bundled and tied, and the labor cost of this work is too great to be offset by the waste paper price. If thrown away, why not given away, to public libraries? I am informed that it costs about fifteen or twenty cents for binding, and that the 42nd Street library has facilities not only for rebinding, but for original binding. It is quite possible, as I know, that a thorough investigation of this suggestion might prove it impractical because of factors not considered here. But has it, or anything like it, ever been considered or investigated[?]

Or, on the whole, is it not true that any ordinarily well informed person is compelled to reply to your fifth and sixth questions with no more than resentment against the smug conservatism, the superior and reactionary attitude of the library system — and initiated and continued by whom, by what? I should really like to know.

7. How can the State best encourage and guide a uniform and efficient state system of public libraries so that all the people will have fairly adequate opportunities for a lifelong education? I think that to a great extent this question is replied to in the statements above. But, in sum, it is no different from almost anything else in the present scene. The lack of library facilities, the need for urging them, the real basis for all that I have said or that anyone can say in complaint against them as they stand today — all these things result from one cause, and that is our present social formula which believes that scarcity results in high profits for the few, and that high profits for the few is the chief desideratum of life, let the mass slave as need be, starve as need be, and tag along as best it can. The collapse of that preposterous edifice of "prosperity", erected in paper by our viciously unsocial money masters, has resulted in a withdrawal of necessary cultural facilities in schools, libraries, museums, etc. etc. Only when we reverse this philosophy, and come to the State which is truly State-owned, not greed-ridden, not

corporation-controlled, not graft-pitted, not politically fettered, but consciously and with progress and jealous honesty and justice controlled by and through every right of every citizen, however obscure, — only then will there be no need to question or puzzle as to the ways and means for cultural advantages, not to mention material necessities.



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The Editor

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