

Miss Banes ending the history of Malabar Branch in 1936 summarizes certain trends which I have carried through in my report - they are: loss of adult readers; community contacts and discipline problems.

The following is my outline and this I have brought up to the present.

LOSS OF ADULT READERS

1. County charges for use of the branch.
2. No additions to the Yiddish books.
3. No adequate book budget.
4. Mexican infiltration; loss of Jewish patrons.

COMMUNITY CONTACTS

1. Schools.
2. Playgrounds.
3. Co-ordinating Councils; Americanization Classes.
4. Jewish Centers.

DISCIPLINE PROBLEM

1. Gangs of Boys.
2. Organizations to counteract the juvenile delinquency problem and what they accomplished.
3. The Branch's contribution to this problem.

MALABAR HISTORY

To trace the ups and downs of a branch as far as circulation is concerned is not difficult but to find the causes for fluctuations and changes in a library's patronage is quite another matter. So many factors enter into the latter picture that generally no one cause is to blame.

Malabar in 1929, under Miss Pinneo, was a first group branch with a circulation of 167,000. The book count was 10,805 and the book budget was \$3,800.00. Seven years later, the branch under Louise Banes reports a circulation of 131,208 for the year 1935-1936 and quotes a book-budget of \$1,247.00. The year's loss was 6,909. Part of this loss was attributed to the \$2.00 charge for the county residents using the branch. Fifteen percent of the branch's borrowers lived outside the city and during this period the registration dropped 10%. Miss Larson reports in 1937-1938 a loss again in adult of 67 in registration but a gain of 28 in juvenile due to a new regulation of lifting the charge of \$2.00 for the children. At this time Mexican children were entering the schools in increasing numbers, This and a shortage of books were the causes for the losses. Miss Moyle in her 1939 report states, "It is hoped that the nadir of circulation has been reached and that the County ruling with its attending \$2.00 fee will cease to be a factor in registration losses. Although the schools report a high percentage of Mexicans each year, Malabar continues to be 99% Jewish. We believe that Malabar reached bed-rock in 1938 with an annual circulation of 117,305, a tremendous drop from its all time high of 198,438 in 1933." Juvenile percentage jumped from 53% to 56% at this time.

In 1940 war was declared and as the population around Malabar was foreign it was natural that the circulation would suffer heavy losses. Many had relatives and friends in the war zones so radio broadcasts were

of much more importance to them than reading. Another factor affecting the losses was the use of admission cards by the young people. This was very necessary because of the marauding gangs of boys at night.

The next five years Malabar jumped from 34th to 27th place and reported an increase of 10,305 for the year. The book budget for this year was \$1,280.00 for the year, against \$750.00 of the previous year.

In Mrs. Nicholas's last report she says under the heading "Problems" "Though we have been given several handouts this year, Malabar's chief worry is its initial adult book budget."

In summary it would seem that the book budget has always been of major importance to this branch. It would also appear that although Yiddish books were added to the collection in 1934, none have been added in recent years. ~~With a Yiddish reading public many who do not read in~~ ^{also an excellent collection of} English, ~~there seems to be small wonder why the Jewish people do not come~~ ^{and it is no} ~~in as formerly.~~ ^{that} Also the proximity of the county branches have taken their toll of patrons. Three factors then have done much to discourage readers here - inadequate book-budget; a lack of Yiddish books - and other branches crowding into our territory. Although we have mentioned the Mexicans moving into this district in so far as the library is concerned the readers are practically all Jewish. A count of the application file gave us one Mexican name for every four Jewish names in 1949, making the Jewish readers about 80% of our total. ^{patrons}

COMMUNITY CONTACTS

THE SCHOOLS

Malabar's community contacts have been varied and informal but its greatest contact has been with the schools. East Los Angeles College, Roosevelt and Wilson High Schools, Evergreen, Sheridan, Harrison, Malabar and Murchison grade schools are all in our district. All have been contacted for book talks, for visits to the branch for instruction in the use of a library and for the younger group the story-hours.

Malabar this year is thirteenth in juvenile circulation. This we think, is very good for a small branch.

Beginning with the 1936 report of the children's librarian we read that twenty visits to the schools a month was the minimum and as many classes visited the library for instruction. This indicates the heavy work carried by the children's librarian at Malabar.

In 1937 Murchison School asked for library service. Malabar responded and this weekly visit of the children's librarian and a clerk-typist to help is part of our routine. The children of this district really live on the other side of the track, in homes that most of us would hesitate to enter. They are truly the underprivileged. The only bright places in their lives are their school and playground activities. So if the library can contribute its share by supplying good books it seems almost imperative that it do so. At times when book losses seem very large and parents and even teachers are indifferent we have wondered if the work was worth while.

With the older boys and girls contacts have been made through book talks and of course through the help we have given them with their studies. Reference work has always been very heavy at Malabar and as a

new member of the staff working with a small collection of books, it is doubly hard not to have the books one needs.

Boys' Day has always been featured at Malabar. During the war patriotic motifs were used and lists of books boys would be interested in were stressed. The past year the librarians of the Eastside branches entertained them with lunch first and then initiated them into the routine of library work.

Summer-work at the branch has been varied - a book circus with Mr. Leo Politi meeting 400 children, to weekly matinees from the various playgrounds holding forth on our back lawn. A play was given with appropriate dances and a story told by the librarian all tying in with the subject chosen.

THE PLAYGROUND.

The Wabash playground has from the beginning been very closely allied with the library. Sometimes, as at present, too closely allied. We can hardly think today while the energetic pianist is playing dance pieces for the children.

Each Spring a festival is carried out by the playground and is participated in by all the children. The parents, of course are the interested spectators. The whole personnel of the playground enters into the spirit of the entertainment and trucks are sent over with decorations and men to put them up. This has been given for years on the front lawn of the library and is very colorful. This year the new librarian watched with fear and trembling hoping that the grass would not be ruined; and strange to say next day one could discover no damage whatever to the lawn.

CO-ORDINATING COUNCILS

Sometimes we have felt it rather irksome to attend the meetings of the Co-ordinating Council, especially if the work was rather heavy, but on the Eastside of town the meetings are so informal and jolly that members look forward to going to them. Each group entertains once during the year serving coffee to those attending. Each member is requested to bring his own lunch. Annual reports generally mention attendance and at times book-talks have been given before the group.

JEWISH CENTERS

There are two Jewish centers in our district, Menorah Center with a membership of 1200, the leader Mr. Moses, and Michigan-Soto Center, with an enrollment of 1400, the leader Joseph Esquith. Here Yiddish and Hebrew classes are held, athletics, arts and crafts and drama lessons given to Jewish members. Recently Michigan-Soto Center has let in the Mexican youth. Book talks have been given to these groups also but not often.

AMERICANIZATION CLASSES

The library has close contact with these new Americans. Miss Spencer, the class teacher preferred to use our clubroom to a room in the school for her pupils. She thought the library was quieter. Every morning during the school year these men and women would come for their lessons. All were Jewish, some were new to our Country, others had been in the Country but had not the time for study. Now that their children were married or at work the parents were learning the language of their adopted country. Some could hardly say good morning at first but when their course was finished they could all talk and most of them could read simple books.

DISCIPLINE PROBLEM

Miss Banes 1936 history of the branch ends as follows, - "Laments over discipline runs like a vivid thread through all the monthly, quarterly and annual reports of Malabar." As early as 1929-1930 the annual report records a meeting of representative citizens meeting with Mr. Wardlow and Miss Pinneo to discuss means of eliminating gangs on the streets surrounding the library, rendering the streets impassable by young girls. The difficulties to be met were the two elements: the orthodox Jewish group and a very militant communistic group. The only constructive social facilities in the neighborhood were the Library, the Hebrew school near the Library and a synagogue.

"The destructive agencies were numerous. A pool room, which served as a meeting place for gangs; a theater which supplemented the pool room; the "Libertarian Center," which was an Anarchistic institution and the Communist Center at Brooklyn and Mott, the Communistic headquarters of the city."

The Committee recommended a social center for social, cultural and recreational activities. They appealed to the Playground Commission to extend the facilities of the Wabash Street Playground. Appeal was also made to the Jewish community of Los Angeles to establish an adequate Jewish center in connection with a Hebrew school.

Menoran Center was established at this time and the Wabash playground was enlarged and a clubroom added.

The five years following this report is the beginning of our history and we will endeavor to follow the changes through to the present time.

DISCIPLINE PROBLEM (Cont'd.)

Miss Larson followed Miss Banes as branch librarian at Malabar and her report of 1938 complains of serious trouble with gangs of boys throwing in stink bombs and lighted papers into the library. The Juvenile authorities were called but the trouble was quelled only temporarily.

Miss Moyle, branch librarian in 1939 says "The general unrest of the war and the heat wave aggravated the usual discipline problem. When it was discovered that incorrigible boys of all the eastside schools were responsible, the "Juvenile Detail" was called. We feel that when the schools with all their machinery of truant officers have given these boys up a librarian has a poor chance when coping with them alone. Our next step will be to require admission cards from students after 7 P.M."

In 1940-1945 Los Angeles woke up to the fact that it had a juvenile delinquency problem and local committees bestirred themselves to see what could be done to eradicate it. At this time \$250,000 was given to the Youth Project. This was the period of the gang riots and of the Mexican zoot suiters, or Pachucos as they called themselves. The gang spirit among underprivileged youngsters is generally caused by bad housing, poverty, economic and social discrimination upon which to build, therefore you find youths of Scotch-Irish, Jewish or Italian, Russian or Negro backgrounds, who have learned to speak Spanish with the Pachuco gangs. These boys and girls assumed the dress and talk of the zootsuirers.

Probably the organization doing the most to help the young Mexicans is the "Community Service Organization of Boyle Heights." Edward Roybal, our new councilman from the ninth district, and several energetic leaders gathered about sixty interested men and women as a nucleus and

meeting weekly planned a program of civic and educational betterment for the Mexican-American Youth.

The Los Angeles Youth Project was organized as a delinquency-prevention program for under-privileged areas throughout the city. This group has been very successful with small children. The Catholic Youth Organization has probably reached more of the Mexican-American boys than any other agency and has been so successful with the boys that as one group leader expressed it, "It is a temptation to turn the Mexican youth problem over to them." However the work with one quarter-million Latin Americans is much too large for that.

Another successful group working with the boys is the division of the Los Angeles County Probation Department organized and directed by Steve Keating, who has battled most of his years for the Mexican-American boys and girls. After the 1943 riots Tom Garcia, Doctor Camilo Servin and later John Brewer, under the direction of Steve Keating set to work on some of the fundamental social and personality factors causing maladjustments in Mexican American youth. Now it is estimated that through their efforts 2,000 Mexican teen-agers meet bi-weekly for dances in school-auditoriums, mountain and beach trips, sewing classes, crafts, motion-pictures, discussions or anything that appeals to them. Their leaders are Mexican or Negro with some University students helping out.

Last but not least of the projects are the Lou Costello Jr. Foundation and the Variety Boys Club of Boyle Heights. These clubs for the boys are open to all and afford every kind of entertainment imaginable as well as opportunities to learn crafts and trades. When we were told at the Variety Boys Club that since their opening in March of this year, arrests of delinquent boys had dropped from 75-100 to four or five we realized that all that most of these boys needed was well directed activity

for their exuberant spirits. With all this civic interest in the youth problem let us turn back and see what had been accomplished as far as the library was concerned.

Mrs. Nicholas's 1948 report,-"Within the branch discipline is vastly improved over our first years here. We have only occasional outbursts and bands of rowdies trying to take over. Conditions in the community are rather bad, with gang wars, purse snatchings and assaults too close to the branch for comfort."

1948-1949 we have had practically no disturbance at all. One night a few rowdy youngsters came in but the playground director escorted them out and that was all we heard about it. I believe that the "vivid thread" has worked itself out and that discipline as the other branch librarians knew it, is a thing of the past.