

WILSHIRE BRANCH LIBRARY

Summary - 1936-1949

This span of thirteen years includes the period of "retrenchment" following the depression; a brief upturn in library interest and in library expectations; the war years when blackouts, shortened hours, loss of staff and the absorption of the public in war interests, all tended to decrease library users; and the post-war years, leveling off to a normal growth.

War-time Library Activities

The Wilshire Branch, under the librarianship of Mrs. Anna-Marie Hook took active part in community war interests. The Club Room became a hospitable meeting place for the Red Cross Production Unit, nutrition and first-aid classes, Air Raid Wardens, groups of Boy Scout and Girl Scout leaders and many other groups. A children's Victory Club under Miss Marie Pinney encouraged children to aid in various phases of the home-front war effort. Book collections were examined and new subjects added to meet demands for study and information.

Library Campaigns

The year 1939 and the year 1941 brought two library campaigns with measures to be voted upon, the first working to prevent loss of library revenue through proposed legislation, and the second asking for an increase in the rate of library taxation. Wilshire Branch entered into the spirit of the campaigns zestfully, placing cards in Western Avenue store windows, issuing bulletins, giving talks, and reaching the schools, the clubs, churches and business groups with information supplied by the Central Library.

Location Handicap

The location of this Branch on a short and little-known street (Council) has always acted as a handicap in extending its services. The stimulation of its activities arising from the beautiful and spacious new building erected in 1927 has been tempered by the subsequent establishment of the Memorial and the Felipe de Neve Branch libraries. The proximity of Pio Pico and John C. Fremont Branches also tends to detract from substantial growth. The fact that no Junior or Senior High School is included in the Wilshire Branch district prevents any extensive group work with young people.

Clientele Changes

This is a thickly built up community of homes and will always carry a substantial demand for reading in good standards, in best sellers, good non-fiction and current interests. An influx of student G I's and their war brides who returned to their parents' homes because of the housing shortage, has been noticeable in reference demands in the past several years. Numerous D P's have found the branch useful for foreign books, language study, citizenship information and general reading. They have expressed keen appreciation of America's free libraries. Some have brought newspapers in which they carefully wrap the precious volumes so generously provided. Many of these recently arrived Europeans are avid readers.

Post-War Growth

The readjustment years are showing steady, if not spectacular growth in book use, registration gain and in book collections as may be noted on the following chart. Stress is being placed on purchase of standard authors and titles as an increase in that demand is evident. Much weeding out of older titles in the various classifications has been made.

Club Room Use

Previous to the war book-reviewing and forum discussion groups met in the club room. These had a measure of conservative popularity.

Close cooperation with Mr. C. I. Vanderbie, Principal of the Los Angeles High School, over a period of years since the war, resulted in the popular library classes in Spanish, and crafts, interior decorating.

The Red Cross continued to hold its meetings of the production Unit in the Club Room, and a Committee of the League of Women Voters has met regularly for the past two years.

The Great Books discussion groups have met with some success for the second year.

Girl Scout leadership classes have been held here for the past three years.

Community Participation

Friends of the Library have made it possible for the Wilshire Branch to display outstanding exhibits from time to time - two annual showings of the paintings of the California Art Club, with an evening meeting of the artists and the Club President, Judge Daniel Beecher, a case exhibit by the Society of Miniature Painters, a distinguished collection of bookplates loaned by Frances Dallar Moss, a striking series of Oriental paintings by Mrs. Blanche Collet Wagner.

The children's room has been enlivened by paintings made by school children illustrating well-loved children's stories, and made available through the schools.

One of the most successful community projects in the last three years has been an occasional "Author's Night" with presentation of authors residing in or known to the community, such as Elsie Noble Caldwell, Fern Rives, Ann Zuker, Joel Keith, Don Blanding and George Palmer Putnam. One meeting was given over to comments and reviews by library patrons.

Two outstanding children's programs with full-house attendance have been arranged and directed by Mrs. Selina Gable as Christmas and Easter parties.

Newspaper Publicity

Newspaper publicity has been continuous in the community paper. The various editors of the Wilshire Press have been generous and cooperative in giving space to library copy. During some periods three community branches, Pio Pico, Memorial and Wilshire, have cooperated in library stories, using the names and addresses and hours of all three branches in each article. At present Pio Pico and Wilshire send alternate copy. Patrons mention seeing the library story and ask for the books discussed.

Staff Personnel

During the thirteen-year period the position of Branch Librarian has been held by Mrs. Anna-Marie Hook until June 1944, ^{Mrs.} Lenore Work from June to September 1944, and by Eleanor Smart since October 1944. Librarians have included Mrs. Eleanore Vivian, Marjorie Kearney, Faith Holmes Hyers and Mildred Adams who took the position in January 1948.

Children's librarians (who are allowed 2½ days at this branch, and formerly one day only) have included Zada Taylor, Dorothy Everett, Leora Griffin, Evelyn Ross, Eleanor Hargan, Doris Glosup, Marie Pinney and the present children's librarian, Mrs. Salina Gable.

Wilshire Branch has been peculiarly fortunate in the personnel of clerk typist and messenger clerks, classifications in which the turnover is usually high. Hilda Domers has given devoted service to the exacting position as clerk typist since 1944. Naji La Bonne, messenger clerk has been at Wilshire eleven years and Grace Oram, six years. Their high ideals of service and their knowledge of branch procedure as well as their personal graciousness have contributed much to the quality of service in a staff where the number of professional is at a minimum.

Work With Children

Occasional surveys of the juvenile population in Wilshire District have revealed that there are few children residing in the district (in 1944 - 604 elementary school children enrolled). There is little indication that this condition has changed materially during the period or will be altered greatly in the future. However, these children are good readers and there is every manifestation of this continuing.

Community Interest In The Library

Appreciation is due the many individuals who have contributed in advancing the library cause in this community. Several have been mentioned in this report in connection with programs, displays and classes. Mr. and Mrs. John Summers and Mrs. Harold Clark have assisted in children's programs. Mr. George Nilsson (lawyer) has given good counsel and has spoken at one of the meetings. The list would be too long to mention those who have given timely suggestions and never know they have aided in library promotion, or the individuals who give heart-warming thanks for friendly atmosphere, cheerful and efficient service. Their word-of-mouth advertising is a most valuable contribution to Wilshire Branch Library.