

GIVE THIS JOURNAL TO A FRIEND

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"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body."

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PORTRAIT OF A LIBRARY

(Contributed.)

It is perhaps difficult to forecast the destiny of a suburban library as a unit of a metropolitan system. Like the church and the school the suburban public library is—or should be—an integral and essential factor in the life of the community, and, like them its growth is the result of a series of cause and effect, of stimulus and response, of action and re-action. These forces, internal and external, which stimulate the growth of a community, also create the need for a more extensive and complete library service. Not only are a competent librarian and staff essential, but equally so is it necessary that municipal officials and trustees should have a sympathetic understanding of the place and function of a public library in the community. The future of libraries must be considered in terms of the changes and developments which may be anticipated in the city and the district, as a result of careful study of planning in both, and provision made as far as possible.

From this standpoint of the interdependence of community and library, we shall get a clearer understanding of the problems of both city and suburban libraries, and that, finally, they must be visualised as parts of a system where all the different activities are in actual co-operation one with another. In that system the separate and individual library has no part or place. Further, the suburban library must develop in technique and method along similar lines to the largest

unit in the metropolitan area, and there is only one way in which this may be done. It is that all libraries in the area must be governed by the one body, there should be a complete library service system running through both urban and suburban libraries in order to effect smooth running in all departments of all the libraries concerned.

The question of competition between city and suburban libraries under such a system almost automatically becomes one of improved service all round, it improves the technique of suburban libraries in exact proportion to the effort made by each. New Zealand has proved that suburban libraries do not benefit at the expense of city or central libraries, but that rather, as improvements are effected in administration and service, a new class of reader is discovered, providing a greater and wider demand for reading matter and for study, resulting in a large increase of patrons all around. The reading public is not static, but reacts to every improvement made by library committees, boards, or librarians, and shows its approval of the greater efficiency by flowing into the public library—either city or suburban.

It is probable that if suburban librarians can profit by the experience and wider knowledge of the urban staff, that before long they would demand that a trained librarian should be enrolled in charge of their own library, having then had an illustration of the merits of superior organisation and training.