

# City Has Beautiful Library But Not Enough Money to Run It Properly, Women Told

A subsistence budget in 1949 will be Baldwin Public Library's fate even assuming that on May 23 when the city budget is adopted by the City Commission appropriate to the fall null of every collected city tax dollar to which is legally entitled by Charter provision.

This is the real financial plight of the public institution housed so beautifully in Baldwin Library as presented by the Library Board chairman, Mrs. John Lambie and the other speakers Monday afternoon at a public meeting of the League of Women Voters on the Library.

Such a budget might fall short by about \$10,000 of the minimum \$37,500 which the American Library Association sets as the standard support needed for satisfactory library service, they indicated.

**Exhausting Strain**

The 1948 city tax-derived support of \$20,982 has imposed an exhausting strain on the insufficient personnel consistently endeavoring to meet the demands of the constantly increasing circulation. It has not permitted hiring more personnel, nor making proper salary adjustments based on cost of living and which is the policy for the present staff. It has been an inadequate allowance for book purchases to meet national standards. It has not provided adequately for repairs and replacements, nothing for new equipment. These are the problems which the speakers drew attention.

The 1949 budget, even assuming it will be larger, will not improve the situation a great deal, was their concern. Chief factors in the problem have been the costly maintenance of a building to which Birmingham population has not grown up and which attempts years of service needs major repairs and replacements; and the enormous increase in library business.

**A Factual Picture**

Monday's meeting, moderated by Mrs. Robert Silbar, local government chairman for the League, was the first step in implementing the directive given by the membership at its annual meeting March 21 to the organization to study the library's problems and take action as indicated.

The meeting afforded members and the public a factual picture of the history of the library and a comparison of its services with national practice and standards by Mrs. Paul Penfield; and an explanation of the sources of library support and means by which that income can be augmented by gifts, memorials and the work of interested friends of the library, by Mrs. William Burlingame.

As a result of public interest and understanding of the library's situation aroused at the meeting, several League members will attend the City Commission's public hearings on the city budget prior to its adoption, according to Mrs. Silbar, to ensure the Commission's understanding all the demands this community makes of and ex-

pects satisfied by, the library, and the costs.

**Public Unaware of Problems**

Also, those who are interested in seeing the continuation of State Aid to Libraries which, in 1948, augmented Baldwin Library's income by \$763 may wish to write to Birmingham's representative Howard Estes, who supported this measure last year in the state legislature, and urge him to do so again; and to John Espe, chairman of the House Ways and Means committee, suggested Mrs. Silbar.

A beautiful and certainly an adequately large building even for a much larger community than Birmingham today, inwardly Baldwin Library faces problems of which most of the public is unaware, seeing only the imposing facade, pointed out Mrs. Lambie, tracing its history.

Growing from an institution founded in 1807 by the Ladies Library Society, a group of women who wanted to improve the opportunity for their children's education and who labored with cake making and like projects to achieve this ideal, to the present department of city government in 1927, present home, dedicated in 1927, the library was housed for several years in the building now known as the south east corner of Maple and Woodward avenues.

This property had been inherited by Miss Martha Baldwin, a resident of the city, who was secretary of the Library Board in its first years. At her death in 1913, Mrs. Baldwin gave the building and grounds to the city provided it be used for library purposes otherwise it was to go to the University of Michigan.

When the City Commission decided upon the present location of the city center, to include the present building, it was necessary before selling the gift property and using these funds for the purchase of the present site, to clear the sale legal to ensure the property not going to the University.

For the construction of the library's present building the city issued bonds for the amount of \$150,000 for the building and \$25,000 for the equipment. The plans for the building grew and grew, until as Mrs. Lambie pointed out, there isn't a building in the state as fine for its size and size. But until we grew up to it, the building is very costly in proportion to the money at our disposal.

**Upkeep Is Costly**

"The building's upkeep has cost so much that we haven't been able to give attention to book supplies and personnel."

"A Friends of the Library for Birmingham organized in the struggle for survival of the depression year of 1932 raised \$100 to buy a book stock to be loaned in a rental basis. This money has enabled the purchase not only of the current modern fiction and the "quintessence" which have paid for themselves out of rentals, but has created funds through these rentals for the purchase of more serious books. And eventually the



The old ghost town of Caribou, Colo., a silver boom city in 1899, presents this desolate appearance today. But the city promises to become more important than it ever was, for work is under way in the area to mine tremendous deposits of pitchblende, out of which is refined uranium, the basic material for atomic energy. The ore is said to be so rich as to make America practically independent of foreign sources for this rare element.

rental books find their way onto the free shelves.

"This original one hundred dollar gift from the 1832 Friends of the Library has resulted in the spending in the past 17 years of \$10,000 and in the purchase of 4000 books of all types. This money is entirely separate from tax monies."

**Still Five On Staff**

"In the year of the building's dedication, 1927, there were 10,000 books and five people on the staff. Today, with 30,000 books there are still five people on the staff. There is not sufficient money to hire more."

Another deficiency of Baldwin Library growing out of lack of funds, referred to by Mrs. Lambie, is the lack of technical books in a community where there is heavy demand for this kind of special collection. Instead, Birmingham residents must depend upon Detroit for this need.

In her approach to its problems, Mrs. Penfield noted that the American Library Association's standard of \$37,500 a year as the minimum budget to give satisfactory library service was not based on per capita figures, but on the needs of any library. The Baldwin budget for the coming fiscal year will fall short of this standard, she feared.

In a city of 14,000 the 1948 library budget of \$22,837 (comprising \$20,982 from taxes, non-taxes and \$1855 from fines, non-resident fees, auditorium rentals and gifts) has permitted the library to spend \$1.50 per capita service according to ALA standards.

**\$1 More Per Capita**

A 1949 budgetary increase that would permit the library to spend \$2.50 per capita would be good service according to these standards, she said. To provide, however, the excellent service which Birmingham demands in its libraries would cost, according to the ALA, \$3.50 per capita.

With its present population Birmingham should have, according to national standards as cited by Mrs. Penfield, 35,000 books in its collection and should purchase 2800 new books yearly. But with its present budget limitations, and with the present price of books, it can only purchase 1500 books yearly and has a stock of only 30,000 books.

"Money has had to be used for building maintenance instead of for book purchases," she said, "to begin to correct inadequacies in lighting and ventilation. Even so," she pointed out, "there has not been sufficient money to correct all these deficiencies, and to buy new equipment."

\$2750 higher per year than Birmingham's.

Mrs. Burlingame explained that five cents of each city tax dollar in 1948 went to the library, or one dollar for each \$1000 assessed property valuation.

Explaining other sources of library support, Mrs. Burlingame indicated that \$763 came from State Aid in 1948, other monies up to about \$1200 from rental fees, fines, non-resident cards, record rentals, gifts from organizations and from individuals as memorials. An example of the latter is the Dorothy Holt Vary memorial established by Vassar college alumnae.

**No Consolidation Here**

New trends in libraries throughout the country are being followed by Mrs. Burlingame which include the contract service by which other communities pay for their facilities but can't afford them contract to receive this service from adjoining towns. This contract increases the facilities of the main library; through enlarged income sources and it gives a good library to rural areas. The benefit is a two-way one, she said, and is somewhat similar to the consolidation in a district. There is no such consolidation in Oakland County for libraries.

A challenge facing this library, indicated by Mrs. Burlingame, is the increasing importance of audio-visual materials. Someday, she said, there should be sufficient money to purchase a Recordak, equipment providing for the reading of microfilm for the U. S. Times and other publications too bulky to subscribe to daily and store.

Mrs. Burlingame stressed the importance of the voters' intelligent interest in the city election of Library Board members and in encouraging qualified civic-minded citizens to run for office.

**Summarize Atlantic Pact**

Preceding the program on the Library, Mrs. F. Smith summarized the North Atlantic treaty and urged all citizens to read and understand this pact and let Michigan senators Homer Ferguson and Arthur Vandenberg know their point of view to help Senate decision as to whether this treaty of world-wide importance should be ratified.

Mrs. Cleveland Walcutt reported for the League of County government committee the County Supervisors annual meeting of April 12, adjourned to April 22 at 10 in the Masonic Temple, Pontiac. She urged League members and the public to attend this County Supervisors meeting and the reappointed Road Commissioner Hudson will report how the road commission plans to spend one-half mill of county tax monies.

This is the first time in many years, stated Mrs. Walcutt, when the road commission will have money to spend other than that coming from gas and road taxes.

**Circulation Increases**

The departments of the Library that suffer because of this need to deflect book monies toward library maintenance are the non-fiction and children's books, she noted. Fiction pays for itself through the rental library. There is urgent need for a specially trained person to be the children's librarian, she said, but not enough money to hire one. "Last year book circulation increased from \$1,000 to \$10,000. There should be three professional librarians on the staff, according to standard library practice, instead of the present two. There is need for a full time page to do the work now being done in costly fashion by a trained person because there isn't enough money for a full time page. No business man would tolerate a situation as now exists at the library where workers earning an hourly rate of \$1.15 do the work that a worker at the rate of 50 cents could do—running up and down stairs to fetch magazines," she emphasized.

**Paid Less Than Teachers.**

Comparison by Mrs. Penfield of library salaries with high school teachers' salaries indicated that the professional librarians at Baldwin Library are paid less than local high school teachers with equal years of training and experience. Grose Pointe's librarian, she pointed out, earns a salary

once, for the Cause that lacks assistance.

For the future in the distance—and a God forever in view!—From "Uncle Chas", in a n y times, I received his encouragement to continue, through The Eccentric, various efforts to lend a hand in the improvement of mankind's complexity of affairs. He was always for the optimistic, though fully aware of mankind's shortcomings.

Health to him meant merely a portion of the tools with which to repair and re-shape, for the better, the lot of human beings, whose life impacted, for the good, upon countless thousands of people.

His body will be buried near his cabin home on Duck Island.

But his soul still lives within the thoughts and lives of many who remain to mourn his loss . . . and, the celestial highway of the Universe. He will, as he wrote me: "I look upon the Other Shore as a finest possible place for exploration."

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