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## PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE U. S.

### PUBLIC LIBRARY FACILITIES

In preceding issues of the News Letter there have appeared studies that indicated the reading habits of North Carolinians, and tables that gave North Carolina's rank among the states in reading magazines and newspapers. The reader has noticed that the states that rank high in wealth, in efficiency of school systems, in birth-places of prominent men, and other so-called measurements of progress, rank high in reading, and vice versa. After thinking over these facts one might wonder what the relationship is between reading habits and public library facilities. The accompanying study endeavors to throw light upon this question.

The table which appears elsewhere ranks the states according to the number of inhabitants in each state per volume in public libraries containing 5,000 volumes or more. Owing to the fact that statistics of smaller libraries in many states are not available, it was necessary in ranking the states to exclude libraries with fewer than 5,000 volumes. This does not seriously affect the rank of states. In North Carolina 71 percent of all volumes are in libraries with 5,000 or more volumes. North Carolina would still rank last were every book in every public library, small and large, considered.

The figures as to the number of volumes are taken from the Educational Directory, Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 1 for 1925, and supplemented by figures from Patterson's American Educational Directory.

### Massachusetts First

The table, which is self-explanatory, shows that Massachusetts leads the states of the Union in public library facilities. She has .460 inhabitant per volume in libraries with 5,000 or more volumes, or more than two volumes for every man, woman, and child, in the state. New Hampshire with .464 inhabitant per volume, or 2.14 volumes per person, gives Massachusetts a very close race. Connecticut and Vermont follow, and then comes California, which has .6 inhabitant per volume, or 1.6 books for each inhabitant in the state. North Carolina ranks last of all the states, having 11.17 inhabitants per volume, or .077 volume per person. South Carolina ranks next above North Carolina, and apparently can return the frequently proffered gratitude on the part of North Carolina for her existence and feel thankful for North Carolina! North Carolina has in public libraries slightly more than one-half as many volumes per inhabitant as all the Southern states combined and less than one-sixth as many as the average for all the states of the Union.

An examination of the table showing the rank of the states in reading magazines and their position in number of volumes in public libraries reveals a very definite relationship. Relatively, the states that rank high in one rank high in the other and those that rank low in one rank low in the other. California stands first in reading magazines and fifth in number of volumes in public libraries; Massachusetts ranks eighth in one and first in the other; North Carolina ranks forty-third in one and last in the other; and Mississippi comes last in one and forty-fourth in the other. Of the sixteen states that foot the list in reading magazines, thirteen are Southern, and of the sixteen states that stand at the bottom in public libraries, fourteen are Southern. Evidently there is a very definite relationship between the public library and the reading habits of the people.

### Percent Having Access

The number of bound volumes is not the final measure of library development. The use of books, as shown by the yearly circulation, the location of libraries, as determined by the number of people having access to them, and other factors, are important. The accompanying column in the table gives the percent of the people in each state who had access to public libraries in 1923. The term access means reasonable opportunity to obtain books from public libraries, such as residence in a city or town in which there is a public

library, or in a county in which there are branch libraries or county-wide library systems.

The column showing the percent of population having access to public libraries was compiled from the American Library Directory for 1923 and refers to the number of people living in all places where public libraries serve a population of 1,000 people or more. In many places, such as California, library service goes beyond the limits of the town in which the library is located. In such cases all people who live in the area served are included. Almost all public libraries that contain as many as 300 volumes serve at least 1,000 people. So in reality, the column in the table which shows the percent of people having access to public libraries gives the percent that have access to all public libraries that have more than 300 volumes on their shelves.

### California First

A glance at the percentage column shows that California ranks first among the states in the percent of the total population having access to public libraries, followed closely by Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. Mississippi ranks last with only 10.5 percent of the people having access to public libraries. In the ratio of her population having access to public libraries, 21.7 percent, North Carolina stands fortieth among the states. But her libraries have few volumes for the most part, so that in inhabitants per volume she ranks last of all the states.

The reader, by referring to a previous study, will find a very close correlation between the rank of the states as readers of 47 magazines and their rank in the present study as to inhabitants per volume in public libraries.

### Rank by Areas

The following table shows how the geographic areas of the United States rank in inhabitants per volume in public libraries. It also shows the percent of the total population having access to public libraries.

Rank	Groups	Inhabs. per Volume	Percent Having Access
1	New England	.525	92.6
2	Far West	.77	33.3
3	Middle Atlantic	1.53	73.6
4	Mountain	1.67	41.4
5	Middle West	1.69	62.9
6	Southern	6.54	20.7
	U. S. Average	1.47	54.2

Relative to population the New England states have more than 12 times as many volumes in public libraries as the South. The Far West has more than eight times as many books per inhabitant. The New England states average about 21 times as many volumes per inhabitant as are found in North Carolina. In other words, if our public library facilities were multiplied 21 times we would then be on a parity with the six New England States!

### Extremely Poor Showing

The South as a group ranked last in reading magazines and newspapers but there was not so great a difference in favor of other sections in the reading of newspapers and magazines as we find in volumes in public libraries, or in the percent of the population having access to public libraries. The showing made by North Carolina and the South in public library facilities in comparison with other areas is far below one's reasonable expectations. In no other study of an educational nature that we have made has North Carolina, or the entire South for that matter, made such a poor showing as in this particular one. We cannot recall ever having made another economic or social study in which North Carolina was so clearly outdistanced as in this one.

It cannot be said that North Carolina's low rank is due to the fact that libraries with less than 5,000 volumes are omitted. In North Carolina in 1924 there were in tax-supported public libraries including the State Library, and subscription libraries, 309,873 volumes, or 8.26 inhabitants per volume. If every book in every public library, large and small, were included

### A GREAT UNIVERSITY

A really great state university must both express and serve the deepest needs of the last man and woman and child in the state. Such universities come out of a vast co-operative enterprise in which the whole state shares.

The real political function of a university is "the training of a race of unofficial statesmen we can trust to manage the life of society when society has passed out of the age of politics. But this will involve a more intimate relating of state universities to the life of the state. The statesmanship of our university presidents, in the future, must be expressed not so much in wire-pulling at state capitols as in the development of a more realistic and statesmanlike education that shall enhance and enrich the common life of the state as well as educate the individual students."

Obviously a state must contrive to harness both the power of the government and the knowledge of the university if it is to achieve the 'good life' of its citizens.—Glenn Frank, the new President of the University of Wisconsin.

for North Carolina, and libraries with fewer than 5,000 volumes were excluded for all other states, but for South Carolina, North Carolina would still remain last of all the states, and we know that South Carolina has many small libraries. We regret to realize that our state occupies the cellar position in such an essential matter, but keeping the fact a secret will never do any good. Knowing her status in public library facilities, North Carolina should make a definite move to improve conditions.—O. Stone.

### THE CALIFORNIA PLAN

Excluding the Library of Congress and state libraries, there are 31 public libraries in the United States that contain 200,000 volumes or more. Only one of these, The Louisville Public Library, could be classed as a Southern library, and it is near the Northern border line.

Large libraries are important, but they are not necessarily the basis of an efficient library system. A thorough service coextensive with the population is the final measure of efficiency. California strives for this thoroughness through the means of her county-wide system. This system first began in California in Sacramento County on October 1, 1908, and on July 1, 1924, it embraced 42 counties, circulated 2,936,627 volumes, operated 4,068 branch libraries, affiliated itself with 2,411 school districts, and used an income of \$1,296,446.53.

California, to a large extent, is operating through central libraries and town centers. North Carolina is especially blessed with small but growing towns. She has 468 incorporated places, and only eleven states outrank her in this respect. If these small towns were supplied with libraries, a large percent of the population of the state would be within easy reach of books. This is the situation generally found in the New England states. An alternative is the county-wide travelling library service as established in California and in many counties in other states. Motor truck service could do marvels in giving wider circulation to the city and small-town libraries. In other words a state system functioning through a large number of small-town centers supplemented by motor truck service would give the state a most ideal public library service system.

### SEVEN LARGEST LIBRARIES

The table below gives some facts concerning the seven largest public libraries in North Carolina, the state library excepted. The circulation per volume in four of these libraries exceeds the Admirable Standard of yearly circulation which shows again that given a chance North Carolinians will read.

The Carnegie library of Asheville leads in circulation per volume, the average volume being used 7.21 times during the year. The Greensboro public library had the largest income, \$13,587.81, as well as the largest number of volumes, 21,362. The Asheville library ranks fourth in number of volumes and sixth in income, but first in aggregate circulation as well as in circulation per volume. It will be recollected that Buncombe county, in which Asheville is located, stood first among the counties of the state in reading eight national magazines for which circulation data by counties were available. In all probability the people of Buncombe read more than the inhabitants of any other county in the state.

Library	No. of Volumes	Cir. per Volume
Carnegie Library, Asheville	15,789	7.21
Durham Public Library	12,464	6.84
Carnegie Library, Charlotte	12,100	6.84
Carnegie Library, Winston-Salem	17,899	5.87
Greensboro Public Library	21,362	4.18
Olivia Raney, Raleigh	18,142	3.53
Wilmington Public Library	11,818	3.15

### A BETTER TOWN BUILDER

Agriculture, said Herbert Hoover the other day, is a better town builder than industry. The remark is one that deserves more than passing notice. The chambers of commerce in nine out of every ten towns in the United States should have this very fact drilled into their systems. The majority of the American towns which now are straining their suspenders in an effort to pull factories in their direction will make more healthful progress if they forget the factories and extend a cooperative hand to the farmer.

Agriculture is the backbone of the average small town, but the town boosters are inclined to forget this fact. They labor under the mistaken notion that a good town means a bigger town and that a bunch of factories would solve their problem. The goodwill and the whole-hearted support of the farmers in that town's trade territory are vastly more desirable than factories for the average town. This goodwill and this support will not come unsought and uninvited. The boosting of a community's agriculture will be bread cast upon the waters. The town will progress without belching smoke stacks.—N. C. Cotton Grower.

### BOOKS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE UNITED STATES

#### Inhabitants per Volume and Percent Population Having Access

In the following table based on Educational Directory, Federal Bureau of Education Bulletin No. 1, covering the year 1924, supplemented by statistics from Patterson's Educational Directory for 1924, and the 1920 census of population, the states are ranked according to the number of inhabitants per volume in all public libraries having 5,000 volumes or more for the year 1924. Seventy-one percent of all volumes in public libraries in North Carolina are in libraries with 5,000 or more volumes. The accompanying column shows the percent of the population in each state having access to public libraries. School and college libraries are not considered, but only public libraries.

Massachusetts ranks first with more than two volumes per inhabitant, while North Carolina comes last with more than eleven inhabitants per volume. Only one-fifth of the people of the state have access to public libraries (see interpretation).

United States average 1.47 inhabitants per volume.  
District of Columbia .062 inhabitant per volume, or about 16 volumes per inhabitant.

Orlando Stone, Research Assistant  
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Rank	States	Percent Inhabs. of Pop. per Having Volume Access	Rank	States	Percent Inhabs. of Pop. per Having Volume Access
1	Massachusetts	97.4 .460	25	Utah	55.3 1.89
2	New Hampshire	96.1 .464	26	Idaho	30.6 2.32
3	Connecticut	90.2 .602	27	Arizona	18.5 2.36
4	Vermont	82.6 .607	28	Missouri	44.1 2.37
5	California	97.6 .609	29	Nebraska	35.6 2.53
6	Nevada	20.8 .65	30	Pennsylvania	53.8 2.73
7	Rhode Island	78.7 .68	31	South Dakota	24.9 2.93
8	Maine	71.3 .74	32	Kansas	41.2 2.87
9	Delaware	59.6 .76	33	Tennessee	22.0 3.30
10	Wyoming	82.0 .78	34	Kentucky	25.5 3.78
11	New Jersey	80.6 .95	35	Oklahoma	25.6 5.09
12	Oregon	64.4 1.02	36	North Dakota	17.4 5.61
13	New York	84.0 1.26	37	Louisiana	28.2 5.65
14	Indiana	66.4 1.35	38	Alabama	21.8 5.73
15	Montana	48.9 1.421	39	West Virginia	16.4 5.82
16	Illinois	68.5 1.423	40	Florida	35.7 5.99
17	Iowa	40.6 1.48	41	Virginia	24.7 6.85
18	Colorado	46.8 1.50	42	Arkansas	11.2 6.89
19	Michigan	65.2 1.51	43	Georgia	23.9 6.90
20	Wisconsin	62.8 1.53	44	Mississippi	10.5 7.33
21	Minnesota	46.7 1.58	45	Texas	25.3 7.43
22	Ohio	69.9 1.63	46	New Mexico	15.3 7.56
23	Washington	68.0 1.67	47	South Carolina	13.7 8.65
24	Maryland	66.0 1.68	48	North Carolina	21.7 11.17

### RANK OF REPRESENTATIVE STATES

The following table gives the main facts about public libraries in twelve widely scattered states. The table covers all tax-supported public libraries in each state, with the exception of the state library and a few small libraries concerning which data were incomplete. The information was compiled from the annual and biennial reports of the separate state library commissions.

The table portrays some interesting facts. Books in libraries in the Far West are used more than in the states considered in other parts of the country. The people in the South read fairly extensively the books in their libraries; the annual circulation per volume in Southern libraries, represented by those in Georgia and North Carolina, is more than four times the number of volumes. Evidently the low rank of the South in reading is due more to the lack of facilities than to any natural aversion to reading. Our people read when they have access to collections of books, as the circulation in most of the city libraries of the state will testify. The South, as represented by North Carolina and Georgia, spends very little per inhabitant on public libraries, the amount being less than 5 cents in each of these two states. Indiana spends 58 cents per inhabitant, Oregon 51 cents, Washington 44 cents. Few states, if any, spend less per inhabitant on public libraries than North Carolina, which explains why we rank last of all the states in volumes per inhabitant in public libraries.

### Statistics of Public Libraries in Twelve States

No. of Libraries Considered	States	No. of Volumes	Aggregate Circulation	Total Income of Libraries	Cost per Inhab. Cents
41	Oregon	614,809	3,314,425	5.40	\$393,778
50	Washington	863,486	4,461,610	5.17	591,261
11	Idaho	96,395	1,437,758	4.92	41,293
51	Oklahoma	373,900	1,839,577	4.91	307,863
219	Illinois	3,674,451	17,578,379	4.78	2,094,609
23	Georgia	221,306	950,644	4.36	140,525
50	N. Carolina	210,733	919,769	4.36	124,645
207	Indiana	2,395,420	9,542,793	3.98	1,691,332
24	N. Dakota	138,113	467,132	3.95	93,651
36	Missouri	1,415,832	5,199,118	3.68	1,259,946
122	Nebraska	723,882	2,569,279	3.55	307,022
14	Maryland	531,299	1,226,732	2.31	304,103