

Berea College Extension Library

Berea College Extension Library conducts a wide range of activities. To its pleasant reading room come many teachers from rural schools and many country folk both adult and children. Here they may happily browse and choose at will from the well chosen selection of books, or if in need of advice it is given in such a friendly way by the librarian as to warm their hearts. Life-brightening is not alone book-loaning in this library.

Regular trips are made each month to schools in Rockcastle and Jackson counties. A few schools not accessible by the bookcar have books left for them at convenient places on the route.

Community libraries are placed in neighborhoods within a radius of 15 miles of Berea. Stores, homes, churches gladly assist in the distribution of these books to the community folk, old and young. Other community libraries are placed in more distant centers by enterprising students returning home for summer vacation.

Traveling libraries, numbering seventy-five and containing over 2800 volumes, go out to remote mountain schools. Often these libraries furnish the only reading material in a neighborhood with the possible exception of the county paper or an occasional cheap magazine. Seat work packages and collections of pictures, posters, clippings, and stereoscopes and views are also circulated to the schools.

Through these various channels of distribution Berea College Extension Library circulated in 1938-39, 11,684 books.

"One of the teachers set aside one corner of her dark, dingy school room as 'the library'. Here, on a home-made table, painted by the children, were arranged our books and papers. Over it was hung a picture, and as long as any flowers were to be had, a bouquet added its touch of brightness. As a reward for lessons learned on time, a child was permitted to go to the library to read? Who can say how much this enthusiastic young woman may be doing for her boys and girls in a neighborhood where moonshine is made up every creek, and where there have been brawls and even a killing almost within a stone's throw of the schoolhouse."

"It has been very gratifying to see the improvement in reading from year to year--both in the number of readers and in the quality of books read. When the work was begun three years ago, many of the children in the upper grades were either reading the simplest stories, suited to second or third grade, or were not caring to read at all. Of course there are a few who do not now nor ever will, I suppose, enjoy reading; but the majority of them are reading books well up to their grade and reporting on them."

"We have had eleven Home Reading Circles in use this winter. Three of these have been placed in new communities ... The books in these libraries are not only for children but for adults as well, and are chosen with as broad a view as can be done from our limited number of books. I do appreciate more and more the part those people play, who not only care for these libraries, but also encourage the use of them. Some of these are busy mothers with large families of little children; others are

store keepers or postmistresses--all of them with work of their own, but willing to give time, as well as space, in their crowded quarters to their neighbors and friends who come to borrow. One lady proudly told me that one hundred thirty-nine books had been read from her circle, besides those her husband had read, and he had read all but the children's books. Surely such women are doing their part in community welfare."

" I suspect if our libraries could speak we should hear some interesting adventures. For instance, they are not always appreciated. Occasionally they fall into the hands of thieves who have broken into the school house. One teacher lost thirteen books in this way. Some teachers find it necessary to keep the library at the boarding place and take only a few books to school each day. The mode of reaching their destination is often interesting, too, for this varies from mail train to river boat and from private car to mule back. One teacher from ...County wrote to ask if she may keep hers a little longer 'until the roads get better, as the mail carrier has to go on a mule about twelve miles'. A wooden case containing forty-five books would be quite an addition to the usual daily mail!"

"Our new plan of asking for monthly reports from the teachers worked very well with the more progressive teachers. The ... school, taught by ... was the most outstanding in both the amount and quality of reading done, as well as oral and written reports made. In the four upper grades, averaging 15 1/2 pupils, and average of 27 books per pupil was read and reports made. This is a small school to be sure, and the teacher was able to give much personal attention to the pupils. This same school last year was almost broken up because of a neighborhood feud. Nothing of that sort was noticed this year. Instead, there seemed to me always a pervasive atmosphere of happy busy-ness in the room. It was a clean room, too, for this same young woman made use of the personal cleanliness charts, such as are issued, one for each pupil, free of charge to teachers, by one of the large soap companies. It would be a happy day for the general health of all rural school children if their teachers would use the same scheme. Incidentally it would help to maintain the good appearance and lengthen the life of many of our library books used by them."

"An extract from a letter received from one of our borrowers ... pictures quite vividly what a conscientious teacher back in the hills can and often does do. After finishing her regular term of seven months, she asked the parents to allow her to teach an extra month in her home school - I doubt if any pay was received. 'For the past two months I have been constantly with children. Teaching them during the day, walking to and from school with them, mornings and evenings, and sitting up singing, telling stories and reading until about eight o'clock. Yesterday I began to realize that I was tired. Oh yes, I piled up with them at night, too. When a teacher begins to visit families, they can't leave any out. Some children are not very good bed buddies, I have learned.

'Again, I want to say that the library has surely been useful. Thank you many times for letting me use it this month.' (I had extended the time on it for this extra month of teaching.) ' ... who is in the fourth grade read twenty-three books.' "

This teacher organized a reading club in each of her schools and set aside a certain time each day for reading library books. I am sure there must be other teachers who have used their libraries just as intelligently and conscientiously as this one."