

Nebraska Public Library Commission

Lincoln, 22 Ja. 1903

To the librarians of our traveling libraries:-

It was my intention, at the beginning of our work, to communicate with those in charge of our traveling libraries at least once a month, but the pressure of work in this office has been so great that I find it difficult to attend to any correspondence other than what our routine requires. There are many suggestions that come from the librarians and the use made of the books that it would be profitable to send along to all those who serve as librarians, and I am looking forward to the time when a larger appropriation from the legislature will give me an assistant and thus allow me more time for correspondence and general field work. In time, when the traveling library stations in any county are enough in number to justify such an undertaking, I should like to follow the example of some of the other library commissions and have library institutes, where experiences could be exchanged and I could get suggestions from the librarians for the betterment of the system. You have received copies of our biennial report, and can judge from what has been accomplished how impossible it has been for me to devote more time to the traveling libraries.

There has been some misunderstanding concerning the nature and purpose of the traveling library system. The chief purpose of a traveling library is to awaken intelligence, and create a desire for more knowledge, more enlightened forms of recreation, and more scientific methods of living and working. To that end the selection and arrangement of books and libraries has been the subject of the most exhaustive study on my part. In order that each little group of 40 volumes may contain all the elements that tend towards this ideal, the members and secretary of the Commission have given much time and thought, for which they feel amply repaid by the almost universal satisfaction with the character of the books. It would be very much easier to select 500 volumes that would satisfy the needs of even a very small community, than it is to get the same effect with only 40 volumes. We ask you to assist your patrons to a better understanding of the purpose of the traveling library system. As yet, we have only fixed sets of books that come and go as they happen to be available. In time, we may be able to have books enough to permit of a certain range of choice by communities. We try to have only what is reliable as to facts, interesting as to subject matter, entertaining as to ~~xxx-xxx~~ style and elevating in its moral tone. We want to put the best books on topics of special interest to Nebraskans within reach of the people who ought to use them, and we depend upon you to bring them to the attention of such people. If you find a good book on butter making, or domestic economy, or trusts, tell those who are interested in those subjects about the books. If you find books of history or travel that would help out the work of your school, tell the teachers and pupils about them. We are anxious to see an increase in the circulation of the miscellaneous books.

Another purpose of the traveling libraries is to encourage the establishment of libraries and stimulate the purchase and use of good books. The first step in such a process, after a community has wakened to the desirability of having a continuous supply of good books on hand, is to become a permanent station. We add a new station to our list every few days. It ought to be an easy matter for any neighborhood in Nebraska to do that much to help itself. After that will come the building up of public libraries.

The books must be kept covered, and they must be inspected when they come in. They must be packed carefully. Advance the freight and drayage charges to the railroad, or send stamps to me for drayage. I have been bothered by the failure of some of you to attend to this and to send in reports. Any deviation from your instructions is an extra burden for me. Some of you have failed to mark the shipping tag with the name of the shipper, thus requiring me to try several keys to get a box open. Some of you have failed to notify me of the receipt of the books. If any part of the fastening of a box gives out, replace the weak part before sending the box back.

Promptness and businesslike methods will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Edna D. Bullock, Sec'y.