EDITORIAL
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Planning for County Libraries.

The lower house at Lincoln this week will consider the library bills which, because of the interest she has taken in their passage, have come to be known as Mrs. Cochran's measures. The bills re-establish the state library commission, and they offer counties the opportunity to set up county libraries, or regional libraries in which several counties may unite.

The bills passed the senate, but amended in two ways which seem to endanger the proposed county library system. The senate reduced from one-half mill to one-fourth mill the maximum levy permitted in any county for library purposes and fixed a limit on the county librarian's salary of one thousand dollars a year.

It may be helpful for the legislature to remember that it is framing a basic law under which county libraries are to be created and fostered in the years to come. Everyone recognizes that the present is no time to encourage reckless spending, but legalizing county libraries does not compel their establishment. The decision still rests with the people of a county and their board. There will be no plea for library service in bankrupt counties. Those whose citizens feel they can afford the service should be given the right to make it adequate.

In larger and thickly populated counties it is obvious that an arbitrary salary limitation of one thousand dollars a year would not be enough to pay a competent librarian. In other counties less than this might be sufficient. In either event the right to fix the salary should be left with the county board, which is spending monies levied and raised within the county, and which knows local needs, reacts to local public sentiment, and is responsible to the local electorate.

A reasonable limitation by the legislature to guard against excessive expenditure would not be objectionable. It should not be made so drastic as to defeat the very purpose of the bills under consideration.