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A HISTORY OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE TO NEGROES
IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, 1916-1958

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN
LIBRARY SERVICE

BY
MARY ELLEN McCRARY

SCHOOL OF LIBRARY SERVICE

ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
AUGUST, 1959
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The history of public library service to Negroes in Nashville, Tennessee covers a period of 41 years. Because of laws and customs requiring the separation of the races, 34 of these years were marked by segregated services. However, Nashville, along with a few other southern cities has gone far toward establishing equal opportunities for the Negro reading public.

Mrs. Eliza A. Gleason pointed out in her study, The Southern Negro and the Public Library, that before 1900 there seems to be no record of public library services being offered for Negroes, but considerable progress has been made in certain areas which extend public library service to Negroes.1

Anna Holden reported that, since 1941, Negro use of main libraries has become an acceptable practice in certain areas of the South. The Southern Regional Council mail survey of librarians, state library commissions and associations indicated that by January, 1954, public library "integration" in the South had gone this far:

(1) In sixty-two cities and towns Negroes have free use of the main public library.
(2) Twenty-four communities give limited service to Negroes at the main library.

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1Eliza A. Gleason. The Southern Negro and the Public Library (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), p. 27.
(3) In eleven localities in the South, one or more branches give service to patrons regardless of race.

(4) Three library systems have Negro representation on their boards.\(^1\)

Elizabeth Edwards reported that in several sections of the state of Tennessee, changes were being made regarding public library service to Negroes. In a survey made by her in 1950, some random information regarding public library service to Negroes was gathered by sending questionnaires to the municipal and regional libraries of Tennessee. The survey pointed out that Memphis and Knoxville provided branch libraries for Negroes, and that Negroes of Kingsport had been served for sometime by a combined school and public library housed in the school. However, plans were being made for a community branch library for Negro citizens in Kingsport. One city, Chattanooga, reported that the main library had been opened to Negro adults in 1949, but there was also a branch library in Chattanooga which was located in the Negro high school.\(^2\)

The present study is one of a series of historical studies in progress at the Atlanta University School of Library Service. In 1950, Miss Barbara Adkins wrote "A History of Public Library Service to Negroes in Atlanta, Georgia";\(^3\) in 1951, Mrs. Rosebud Tillman wrote "A History of Public Library Service to Negroes in Little Rock, Tennessee Librarian, II (January, 1950), 4-5.


2Elizabeth Edwards, "Public Library Service to Negroes in Tennessee", Tennessee Librarian, II (January, 1950), 4-5.

Arkansas, 1917-1951", and in 1955, Mrs. Rheda Hoffman wrote "A History of Public Library Service to Negroes in Memphis, Tennessee". These were followed in 1957 by "A History of Public Library Service to Negroes in Jacksonville, Florida", by John Curry; "A History of Public Library Service to Negroes in Galveston, Texas, 1904-1955", by Mrs. Glynell Barnes; and in 1958, "A History of the Miami Public Library, Miami, Florida", by Isaac Barfield. The present study represents a pioneer effort to present information regarding the history of public library service to Negroes in Nashville, Tennessee. It should, with the previous studies, be useful for comparison and as a source for presenting the trends in the development of public library service to Negroes in important cities in the South.

**Purpose and Scope**

The purposes of this study are: (1) to secure and describe the facts pertaining to the establishment and development of the

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public library service to Negroes in Nashville, Tennessee, and (2) to appraise the present status of the library service.

Methodology

The historical method will be used in developing this study because it is concerned with the economic, educational and social factors that are interwoven in the establishment and development of public library service to Negroes in Nashville. The records, reports, and other historical materials of the Nashville Public Library that pertain to the establishment and development of library service will be investigated. Consideration will be given to information relating to public library service as given in the Constitution of the State of Tennessee; the Tennessee State Library and Archives Commission; City Hall; correspondence; and information obtained from interviews held with persons who either were participants in the movement to get library service for Negroes in Nashville, or who had some knowledge of the movement.

An appraisal of the present status of library service to Negroes will be made by a comparison with the standards for materials, personnel, finance, quarters, equipment and services recommended for public libraries by the American Library Association. Standards for the comparison of public libraries will be obtained from the following library tools: Public Library Service: A Guide to Evaluation, With Minimum Standards;¹ A National Plan for Public Library Service;²


Characteristics of Nashville, Tennessee

Nashville, the capital of Tennessee, was founded in 1779 when James Robertson and his company of pioneers constructed the wilderness stockade which later became Fort Nashborough, named in honor of General Francis Nash, North Carolina Revolutionary War General killed in the Battle of Germantown. The name of the settlement was changed from Nashborough in 1784, and Nashville became its official name when it was incorporated as a town by the North Carolina Legislature. The town grew rapidly, and in 1806 it was chartered as a city. Tennessee was admitted to statehood in 1796 as the sixteenth state, and Nashville became the permanent state capitol in 1843. The city has grown in the past 176 years from a frontier settlement to an important manufacturing and commercial center with several large industrial establishments. Nashville is popularly known as "The Athens of the South" because of its many buildings which are constructed on the Greek classical design and its large number of educational institutions.

The Census of 1910 indicated Nashville's total population as 110,364, of which 36,523, or 33.09 per cent were Negroes. Between

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1920\(^3\) and 1930, the city's population increased from 118,342 to 153,866, of which the Negro population was 42,835, or 27.83 per cent.\(^2\)

Between 1940\(^3\) and 1950, the city's population increased from 167,402 to 174,307, of which the Negro population was 54,696, or 31.37 per cent\(^4\) (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Negro Population</th>
<th>Per Cent Negro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>110,364</td>
<td>36,523</td>
<td>33.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>118,342</td>
<td>35,633</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>153,866</td>
<td>42,835</td>
<td>27.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>167,402</td>
<td>47,318</td>
<td>28.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>174,307</td>
<td>54,696</td>
<td>31.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Economic Status

The economic status of the Negro group as compared with that of the white group may be seen by contrasting the incomes and types of work of the two groups. Data concerning incomes and industries of white and non-white population are given by the Census of 1950.\(^1\) However, the number of non-whites who are not Negroes is so small that it is negligible, and for this purpose a non-white person in Nashville may be considered a Negro. The median income for white families in Nashville was $2,278, and the median income for non-white families was $1,197.\(^2\) In the income bracket from $3,499 and below, there were 61,570 families, of which 41,820, or 67.92 per cent were white families, and 19,750, or 32.08 per cent were non-white families. In the income bracket from $3,999 and over, there were 24,640 families. The white group comprised 23,505, or 95.4 per cent, and the non-white group comprised the remaining 1,135, or 4.6 per cent. There were fewer Negroes represented in the higher salary range of $3,999 and over. The white group constituted 1,865, or 98.7 per cent of the families in the income bracket of $10,000 and over, and the non-white group constituted the remaining 25, or 1.3 per cent (see Table 2).

Negroes have been admitted to the democratic primary, elected to the Nashville City Council and the City Board of Education; appointed to the Transit Authority, the Censor Board, Housing Authority and the

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\(^1\)Ibid., pp. 64-65, 295.

\(^2\)Ibid.
City Beautification Commission. Of the two taxicab inspectors, one is a Negro. There is one Negro deputy tax collector and one housing code inspector. The number of Negro policemen and firemen has been doubled since the year 1951.

The industry group which contained the greatest number of Negroes was personal services. In this area of 12,924 people employed, 8,682, or 67.2 per cent of them were Negroes, and only 4,242, or 32.8 per cent of them were white (see Table 3). Personal service jobs are usually considered in a low income bracket. It can readily be seen that the economic condition of the Negro group is not comparable to that of the white group.

Among the white business enterprises are six banks, several insurance companies, two daily newspapers, and seven radio stations. Some of the business enterprises owned and operated by Negroes include a bank, several insurance companies, realty companies, retail stores, contracting companies, drug stores and hotels.

Negroes are represented in almost all occupations of the city. Unique is the fact that one division of the city's fire department, located at 12th Avenue, North, and Jefferson Street, which is in a predominantly Negro neighborhood, is managed by Negroes. Mr. John E. Jordan states that the first all-Negro company was organized on January 15, 1885, as Engine Company Number Four, and that the company

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1Nashville Chamber of Commerce, Statistical Record of Nashville, Tennessee, 1957, [n.d.]

## TABLE 2

**INCOMES OF FAMILIES AND UNRELATED INDIVIDUALS OF NASHVILLE BY RACE, 1949**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incomes (in dollars)</th>
<th>Number of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ 1,499</td>
<td>12,820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 ... 999</td>
<td>8,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 ... 1,499</td>
<td>8,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500 ... 1,999</td>
<td>8,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 ... 2,499</td>
<td>8,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500 ... 2,999</td>
<td>7,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 ... 3,499</td>
<td>7,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,500 ... 3,999</td>
<td>5,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000 ... 4,499</td>
<td>4,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,500 ... 4,999</td>
<td>3,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 ... 5,499</td>
<td>4,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6,000 ... 6,499</td>
<td>2,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,000 ... 7,499</td>
<td>2,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 and over</td>
<td>1,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Not reported</td>
<td>5,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91,445</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3

**INDUSTRY GROUP OF EMPLOYED PERSONS BY RACE FOR NASHVILLE, 1950**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fisheries ..........</td>
<td>2,753</td>
<td>2,336</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining .....................................</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction ................................</td>
<td>10,717</td>
<td>8,427</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>2,290</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing ................................</td>
<td>28,682</td>
<td>25,255</td>
<td>88.1</td>
<td>3,427</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, communication and other public utilities</td>
<td>11,961</td>
<td>10,326</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>1,635</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale and retail trade ....................</td>
<td>27,410</td>
<td>22,929</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>4,481</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, insurance and real estate ...........</td>
<td>6,003</td>
<td>5,337</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business and repair services ..................</td>
<td>3,216</td>
<td>2,883</td>
<td>89.6</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal services ..........................</td>
<td>12,924</td>
<td>4,242</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>8,682</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment and recreation services .......</td>
<td>1,283</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and related services ............</td>
<td>14,213</td>
<td>10,645</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>3,568</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration ........................</td>
<td>6,348</td>
<td>5,985</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry not reported .......................</td>
<td>1,754</td>
<td>1,382</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>127,443</td>
<td>100,873</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>26,570</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

changed from the horse-drawn engine to the motor-driven type on March 24, 1920.

Of the 73,642 dwelling units in the city shown by the Census of Housing for 1950, 36,634, or 49.76 per cent of the homes were owned by the residents. Of the 36,634 homes owned by the residents, 31,224, or 85.23 per cent were owned by whites, and the remaining 5,410, or 14.77 per cent were owned by Negroes. ¹

Education

Nashville's school system includes public, parochial, private, commercial and vocational schools. There are 24 elementary schools, six junior high schools, and six senior high schools which are predominantly white; 10 elementary schools, three junior high schools, and two senior high schools which are predominantly Negro. ² Under the United States District Court order, Negro children entering the first grade were eligible to attend previously all-white schools in the city of Nashville beginning September, 1956, and white children entering the first grade were eligible to attend previously all-Negro schools. Nashville's plan for beginning desegregation in the first grade was given court approval on the condition that an additional plan for action on all remaining grades be submitted by December, 1957. Because of a re-mapping and re-zoning of the city by the Board of Education, an estimated 132 Negro children were


²Nashville Chamber of Commerce, op. cit.
eligible to attend 15 formerly all-white schools.\textsuperscript{1} At the end of the 1957-1958 school term, only nine of the Negro children had completed the first grade in desegregated schools. The others were transferred to all-Negro schools at the request of their parents. Beginning with the 1958-1959 school term, approximately 230 Negro first and second grade children will be eligible to attend desegregated schools in the city.\textsuperscript{2}

On the higher educational level, there are 12 colleges and universities in Nashville.\textsuperscript{3} Originally designed for Negroes are Fisk University, Tennessee Agricultural and Mechanical State University, Meharry Medical College, the National Baptist Theological Seminary, and the Nashville Business College. Until 1954, these colleges, excluding Fisk University, admitted only Negroes. Miss Mary D. Shane, assistant registrar at Fisk University, stated that a few white students had been admitted to the school as early as 1940, but there has been an increasing number admitted since 1952.\textsuperscript{4} The well-known colleges in Nashville which were designed originally for white students are Vanderbilt University, Scarritt College and Peabody College for Teachers. They became integrated after 1954.

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{The Atlanta Journal and Constitution}, August 4, 1957, p. 7-E.

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{The Nashville Tennessean}, July 4, 1958, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Nashville Chamber of Commerce}, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{4}Interview with Miss Mary D. Shane, Assistant Registrar, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, September 11, 1957.
Cultural and Social Characteristics

Nashville has its own symphony orchestra, several community theater groups, musical groups and art galleries. The attractions sponsored by the several colleges also constitute many offerings of a cultural nature. Its large number of churches represents many denominations.¹

Recreational facilities for Negroes in Nashville are not comparable to those provided for the whites. Of the 31 public parks and playgrounds, seven are for Negroes. There are 12 summer playgrounds located on school property, of which two are for Negroes; and of the 18 theaters, only three are for Negroes.² Other recreational facilities include two skating rinks for Negroes and branches of the Y.M.C.A. AND Y.W.C.A. The Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, sponsored by the Community Chest, offer many worthwhile activities for cultural development. Of the six hospitals in the city, two are connected with medical schools, two are operated by a religious organization, one by the city, and one by the Federal Government.

General History of Public Library Service

Library service began very early in Nashville's history. The Nashville Public Library, as it later became known, was founded in 1814 as a mercantile library. The first library was chartered by the Tennessee Legislature and was called the Mechanics Institute

¹Nashville Chamber of Commerce, op. cit.
²Ibid.
and Library Association. In 1880 it contained approximately 5,000 volumes. Several other small libraries were chartered, but these were failures. In 1876, a public meeting was called of Nashville citizens and the advantages of a free public library were presented. The result was the organization of the Nashville Library by Morton B. Howell, Dr. Henry Sheffield and Judge Frank T. Reed. When this library was destroyed by fire, Samuel Watkins donated a room in the Watkins Institute, and Hunt Howard donated a sum of $15,000 for the purchase of books. This library was called the Howard Library and was chartered in 1887 by a group of prominent Nashvillians, among whom were Edgar Jones and Judge John Lea. For eleven years the Howard Library was a reference library only. The lack of funds during the panic of 1893 almost closed the library, but in 1898, the Nashville City Council appropriated $2,500 for its operation.¹

On April 22, 1901, the Howard Library, which had for sometime issued borrower's cards at $2.00 per year, was opened to Nashville citizens as a free public library. During the year of 1901, a request was made to Andrew Carnegie for a library donation. Mr. Carnegie offered $100,000 to the citizens of Nashville for a library building on the condition that a site would be provided and the sum of $10,000 be made available annually for maintenance and the purchase of books. The city accepted a plot of ground from J. Craig McClanahan and purchased additional land. Citizens of Nashville contributed more than $1,000 and Andrew Carnegie gave the promised amount of $100,000

¹Merriwether Liston Lewis, "Development of Public Library Service in Nashville," Nashville Public Library, 1930, pp. 1-4. (Typewritten.)
after the city of Nashville agreed to appropriate 10 per cent of the grant, or $10,000 a year for maintenance and the purchase of books. A charter of incorporation was obtained by the members of the Library Board from the State of Tennessee for the Carnegie Library of Nashville, and the property of the Howard Library was transferred to it.  

Transfer of the property of the Howard Library to the Carnegie Library of Nashville is indicated in the following statement:

Whereas, it is the sense of the members of the Howard Library Board that the establishment of the Carnegie Library of Nashville and its proposed maintenance by the city as a free public library, makes it impracticable for the Howard Library to continue in useful operation under its charter, and that the purpose of the library can now be best accomplished by transferring its property to the Carnegie Library of Nashville.  

On April 27, 1903, the cornerstone of the present library building was laid, and in September, 1904, the library was formally opened to the public. Negroes were not allowed the use of this library, and it was in 1916 when library services were offered to Negroes through a special branch. It was during the period of 1912 to 1920, under the administration of Margaret Kercheval as librarian, that the branch for the exclusive use of Negroes was established. In 1934, the name of the Carnegie Library of Nashville was changed to the Nashville Public Library.  

It was opened to Negro citizens in 1950.  

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1Ibid.  
2Secretary of State, Charter of the Incorporation, State of Tennessee, Nashville, Tennessee, November 12, 1901.  
3Merriwether Liston Lewis, op. cit.  
CHAPTER II
HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE
TO NEGROES IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, 1916-1958

Legal Basis

According to the laws of the State of Tennessee, power is given to a governing body of a city to establish a free public library.

On April 9, 1897, the legislature enacted a law which authorized "cities of 20,000 or more population to establish and maintain free public libraries and reading rooms." However, because of a law requiring the separation of the races, it was necessary to establish a branch library for Negro citizens.

The Constitution of the State of Tennessee of 1870 does not mention library service, but libraries are mentioned in the Nashville City Charter. In section 185, it states that:

The City Council may, by ordinance, acquire the property and assets of the Nashville Public Library, and provide for the maintenance and operation of the library, if the Board of Directors of the library transfers the property to the city.¹


The Code of Tennessee of 1932 provided that:

Upon the decision of such governing body to establish, maintain, or support a free public library, or to contract with another library for library service, it shall levy for the purpose a tax of not more than six mills on the dollar on all taxables of such city or town, or shall use therefor funds raised for taxes for municipal purposes, such a library service being declared a municipal purpose.¹

The State Library and Archives Commission was created by the General Assembly in 1951. Through the state librarian and archivist, the Commission administers the library, the archives, and the state's regional library services, operating through four divisions: the State Library Division, the Public Libraries Division, the Restoration and Reproduction Division. The Public Libraries Division promotes the extension and development of public libraries throughout the state by assisting with projects which will strengthen public library service to citizens of counties.²

Dr. Robert S. Alvarez, director of the Nashville Public Library, stated that the library has signed a contract with the State Library and Archives Commission, making available the sum of $7,500 a year for the expansion of the library's services to people in remote areas of Nashville. The County Court agreed to match the new appropriation to make possible the purchase of the County Bookmobile which will be operated from state funds. This service to sections of Davidson County, which have not been served before, began February, 1957.³

¹Secretary of State, "Code of Tennessee," 1932, Title 7, chapter I, art. VI, p. 530.


The legal basis for the establishment of the Nashville Public Library is in the Charter of the Incorporation granted by the State of Tennessee to the library board of the Carnegie Library of Nashville. The Charter reads as follows:

Charter of the Incorporation

Be it known that G. H. Baskette, G. P. Thurston, Alfred E. Howell, Charles G. Trabue and Firman Smith are hereby constituted a body politic and corporate by the name and style of Carnegie Library of Nashville. The general purpose of said corporation shall be to establish and maintain a free public library within the city of Nashville, County of Davidson, State of Tennessee, and such branches thereof as may be necessary or proper to carry out the purpose of this charter. The said purpose to be attained by this corporation is within the purview of the following sub-section of section I of chapter CXLII, acts of the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee passed March 19, 1875 and approved March 25, 1875.

We the undersigned apply to the State of Tennessee by virtue of the laws of the land, for the Charter of the Incorporation for the purposes and with the powers, etc., declared in the foregoing instrument.1

Witness our hand,
G. H. Baskette
G. P. Thurston
Alfred E. Howell
Charles G. Trabue
Firman Smith

The charter contains no discriminatory statement in regard to the use of the library. However, the acceptance of the library donation of Andrew Carnegie for a building by the mayor and city council is written in two parts. They read as follows:

Section A

Be it resolved by the mayor of the city of Nashville, that, whereas, Andrew Carnegie has offered $100,000 to the people of Nashville for a library building on the

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1Secretary of State, Charter of the Incorporation, op. cit.
condition that a site shall be provided and appropriation made for maintenance and books of $10,000 annually; and

Whereas, a public spirited citizen of the city has offered to comply with the first, and the library building and contents contemplated by this donation will be a lasting honor and benefit to the city.

Therefore, the mayor and city council of Nashville will and hereby accept Mr. Carnegie's gift on the condition named by him, and the mayor and recorder are hereby authorized and instructed to convey to Mr. Carnegie this formal acceptance and pledge of continued maintenance upon said conditions and also to express to Mr. Carnegie the city's thanks and sincere appreciation of his generous gift.\(^1\)

Adopted November 14, 1901
Approved November 18, 1901
J. M. Head, Mayor

Section B

Whereas, Mr. Andrew Carnegie has offered $50,000 to the city of Nashville for branch libraries, on the condition that $25,000 of said donation will be used for the branch library for colored citizens of Nashville, upon the condition that the mayor and the city council will appropriate $2,500 annually for maintenance of the library for the colored citizens.

Therefore, the mayor and city council of Nashville will and hereby accept Mr. Carnegie's gift on the condition named by him above stated; and the mayor and recorder are hereby authorized and instructed to convey to Mr. Carnegie this formal acceptance and pledge of continued maintenance upon said conditions; and the mayor and city council of Nashville do hereby express to Mr. Carnegie their thanks and sincere appreciation of his generous gift to the white and colored citizens of the city of Nashville.\(^2\)

Passed April 11, 1912
Approved April 15, 1912
H. E. Howse, Mayor


\(^2\)Ibid.
Negro Branch of the Carnegie Public Library

The building for the Negro Branch of the Carnegie Library of Nashville was erected in 1915 under the supervision of the Board of Directors of the Carnegie Library of Nashville, G. H. Baskette, president. On February 11, 1916, the branch library was opened to Negro citizens. The property on which the building was erected was purchased by the citizens of Nashville through the influence of the Negro Board of Trade, among whom were A. N. Johnson, W. D. Hawkins, J. C. Napier, D. W. Crutcher, and H. A. Boyd. The building was constructed at a cost of $25,000 and paid for by a donation from Andrew Carnegie.\(^1\)

On the main floor of the library was the reading room with the adult department on one side and the juvenile department on the other. Equipment included the card catalog, the newspaper rack, and periodical stand. There were more than 5,000 books in the collection. The auditorium and club rooms were located in the basement.\(^2\)

The first librarian of the Negro Branch of the Carnegie Library of Nashville was Miss Marian M. Hadley, she was assisted by Miss Hattie Watkins. Miss Hadley served during the period from 1916 to 1925. Miss Margaret Kercheval, librarian of the Carnegie Library of Nashville gave guidance and in-service training to the personnel, who worked diligently to interpret the library to the reading public.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Ophelia Lockert, "History of the Negro Branch of the Nashville Public Library," Nashville, Tennessee, [n. d.]

\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid.
Mrs. Olivia C. Thomas, a graduate of Fisk University, was selected as librarian in 1925, and it was during the twenty years which she served, 1925 to 1945, that library service for Negroes was extended to several sections of the city. Sub-branches were placed in housing projects: Andrew Jackson Courts and J. C. Napier Courts; in the Clifton and Maigs Schools; and in the South Street Community Center. The Girl Scouts, the Parent-Teacher Association, and various civic groups held their meetings in the basement of the library.

Although the librarian strived to expand the services of the library, there were not sufficient books and materials available at the branch to encourage more people to use its services. Some citizens complained that the branch was located on a site which was too remote from the thickly populated areas.¹

Mrs. Ophelia Lockert became assistant to Mrs. Olivia C. Thomas in 1941 and was elected librarian in 1946 after the death of Mrs. Thomas.² Mrs. Lockert has made a continuous effort to improve library service to Negroes in Nashville by working with citizens and various civic groups.

A group of citizens met at the library branch in 1947 to discuss means by which library service to Negroes might be improved. A library advisory committee was appointed by Mrs. Lockert, which included W. D. Hawkins, comptroller at Fisk University; Mrs. Josephine Holloway, Girl Scout Executive for Nashville and Davidson County; Rev. W. J. Faulkner, Dean of Men at Fisk University; Arna

¹Ibid.

²Interview with Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, Librarian, Hadley Park Branch, Nashville, Tennessee, March 21, 1959.
Bontemps, Librarian at Fisk University; Miss Lois Daniel, Librarian at Tennessee State University; W. H. Fort, Principal, Ford Green City School; Mrs. Lucille Elakemore, civic worker; Rev. J. T. Patton, civic worker; Rev. C. L. Dinkins, Pastor, East Nashville Baptist Church; V. H. Dixon, real estate business man; and S. E. Grinstead, secretary, Baptist Student Union. The committee appeared before the Nashville Public Library Board and pointed out that suitable reading materials were not available to their young people. They also commented on the meager and inadequate materials at the Negro Branch and requested that the main library be opened to Negro citizens to extend the Negroes' opportunity for self-education.  

1Ophelia Lockert, "History of the Negro Branch of the Nashville Public Library, op. cit.

time. In 1950, the Board voted to locate the new Negro Branch at the entrance to Hadley Park which is in the Northwest section of Nashville, and which seemed to be situated on a site convenient to several schools, housing projects, and near the Jefferson Street Negro business section. The main library was also opened to Negroes during 1950.

In April of 1952, the Hadley Park Branch was opened to the public. An account of its opening was given by the Nashville Globe:

The citizens of Nashville are to be congratulated and the responsible officials complimented on the real progress recorded in the improvement and expansion program of public library service to Negroes. This expansion program was spearheaded by the Nashville Public Library Board of Directors, efficiently directed by Dr. R. S. Alvarez, and advised by a Negro committee appointed by Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, librarian at the Hadley Park Branch.

It is generally felt by library authorities of the atomic age that the modern library fits itself into the new world concept, providing powerful means of securing world peace and radiating a culture that is meaningful. The Hadley Park Branch is one of the most modern libraries in the Southeast.

As a part of its expansion program, the Nashville Public Library placed Booketeries in three suburban Logans Supermarkets during March, 1953. The books include fiction and non-fiction for adults and 125 children's books, which may be borrowed for ten days. The honor-system is used, and borrowers figure their own fines on over-due books.

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1Ibid.
3Interview with Dr. Robert S. Alvarez, op. cit.
Quarters and Equipment

The Hadley Park Branch is conveniently located in a thickly populated residential district and is easily accessible to several schools, housing projects, and the Negro business section. It is a one-story brick building, 75 feet in length with 2,820 square feet of floor space. It is equipped with modern appliances including air conditioning, electric heating system and fluorescent lighting which add to the comfort of the building. A carport attached at the back of the building houses the Gerstenslager bookmobile, which was put into operation during 1952, the same year of the branch's opening.1

The walls are painted in light and deep green colors. The floors are covered in green and brown colored tile, and the lounge furniture is of green, yellow and red leather. Potted flowers in the windows and on the shelves contribute to the cheerful appearance. As recommended by the American Library Association, the library building has "an inviting appearance with space and facilities to serve the immediate district as a reading center."2

The reading room is at the front of the building with the children's department on one side and the adult department on the other. The "Young Modern's Den," designed for teen-agers, is located behind the circulation desk. It contains shelves for books and records, two sound-proof listening booths, and is equipped with lounge furniture of yellow, green, and red leather. Although this department is separated from the circulation desk by a corridor, it can be seen

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1Interview with Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, Librarian, Hadley Park Branch, Nashville, Tennessee, June 1, 1957.

2American Library Association, Co-ordinating Committee On Revision of Public Library Standards, op. cit., pp. 57, 60.
from the circulation desk through glass doors and glass partitions. The children's department contains two low, round tables with chairs suitable for the comfort of children. The tops of the shelves are decorated with bright colored stand-up pictures which depict some of the characters in children's books. The pictures are designed by Tom Tichenor, who conducts marionette shows each week at the main library and the branches. The adult department contains two long tables with chairs, a newspaper rack and a bulletin board. Near the circulation desk are the vertical file and the card catalog. Other equipment includes an automatic charging machine and a book truck. On the right of the corridor which is behind the circulation desk are the librarian's office, two rest rooms, a storage room, and a work room. A public meeting room with green and yellow flowered draperies is located at the end of the corridor to the left. Pictures of such outstanding personalities as Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington, and George Washington Carver are on the walls. It is equipped with a piano, tables, folding chairs, and two small rooms for storage and cooking purposes. The meeting room is used by various organizations, such as the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, homemaking clubs, discussion groups and other civic organizations. This arrangement of facilities is in accord with the standards recommended by the American Library Association which state that "attention should be given to control of sound, by acoustical treatment, proper covering, or partitions, there should be work space and furnishings for study and informal reading facilities for all age groups."

1Ibid., pp. 58, 60.
Hadley Park Branch and the main library are further described in a statement made by Dr. Robert S. Alvarez in his article, "Happy on Fifty Cents," which states:

The trend in libraries today is away from this institutionalized air toward making libraries more attractive, colorful, and happy places to work and visit. The three big words in libraries today are Color, Warmth and Informality. We are beginning to see that there is a real relationship between the appearance and atmosphere of our library buildings and the amount of use and public support that we receive.1

### Materials Collection

#### Books

The total number of volumes in the main library and branches for the year 1958 was 161,320. Of this number 121,928 are for adults, constituting 24,010 fiction books and 97,918 non-fiction books. There are 39,392 volumes for juveniles, constituting 16,325 fiction books and 23,067 non-fiction books. There are 4,799 reference books.2 The number of volumes does not meet the needs of the 360,000 persons who are served by the library system. Based on the recommendation of the American Library Association,3 the Nashville Public Library should have at least 1,000,000 volumes in order to meet the minimum standards.

When the Negro Branch of the Nashville Public Library was sold in 1949, all books in usable condition were moved to the temporary

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2Interview with Mrs. Ruth Brenta, Catalog Librarian, Nashville Public Library, Nashville, Tennessee, March 20, 1959.

3American Library Association, Committee on Postwar Planning, op. cit., p. 71.
branch building and from there to the Hadley Park Branch when it opened in 1952. New books are added to the collection every three months. The book selecting, ordering, cataloging, processing, mending and discarding are done at the main library. When books reach the branch they are ready to be circulated. Hadley Park Branch and the bookmobile have an approximate book collection of 10,000 volumes which consists of adult and children's books including fiction, biography, history, sociology, and approximately 300 books on Negro life. The book collection is not adequate to serve the Negro population of 51,696. The American Library Association recommends that, "the minimum total branch book collection should range from one-third to one-half volume per capita."¹ This should give Hadley Park Branch at least 18,232 to 27,348 volumes. Dr. R. S. Alvarez stated that $22,590 allocated from the city funds for books for the year 1956 was cut to $15,400, consequently, sufficient funds were not available to buy enough books.²

Periodicals

The branch library subscribes to 13 periodicals. Of special interest to younger children and adolescents are Child Life, American Girl, Children's Playmate. Of special interest to parents on child study is American Childhood. The three periodicals which are helpful to the homemaker are Ladies' Home Journal, Good Housekeeping and

¹Ibid.
²Interview with Dr. R. S. Alvarez, op. cit.
Better Homes and Gardens. Of special interest to adults and young adults on current events, politics and geography are Life, Look, Saturday Evening Post, and National Geographic. One periodical, Ebony, is on Negro life. The library subscribes to three weekly newspapers and one daily newspaper. According to a standard list of periodicals approved for small libraries by the American Library Association, the kinds of periodicals which the library subscribes to provide a variety of interests for all ages, but the number and subject interests of the periodicals is not adequate to meet the needs of the readers in the community in which the branch is located.

Other Materials and Services

The vertical file material consists of pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and mounted pictures. The "Young Modern's Den" has a collection of approximately 300 recordings consisting of language records and different types of music; popular, classical and semi-classical. The main library features a music and film department, which circulates 16mm. sound films and projectors, reproductions of famous paintings, records and radios. Any of these materials may be borrowed free, except the FM radios which are loaned for 50 cents per week and the reproductions of paintings which are loaned for 50 cents monthly. This practice is in accord with the standards recommended

2. Interview with Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, op. cit.
by the American Library Association which state that "non-book materials should be an integral part of the collection, and films and recordings should be available on request by loan from the library system."¹

Three booketerias, the first of their kind in the South, are located in Logan's Supermarkets throughout the city. They contain small collections of popular and current fiction and non-fiction, and a collection of children's books. There are three bookmobiles which give service to citizens in Nashville and outlying areas.²

**Bookmobile**

The Gerstenslager bookmobile of the Hadley Park Branch, is a modern, air-conditioned bookmobile and carries more than 2,000 books for all ages and interests to schools, housing projects, and remote sections of the city. The regular library card secured at the branch may be used to borrow books from the bookmobile which makes 20 stops each week, Monday through Friday, for one hour, from 2:30 P. M. through 7:30 P. M.³

**Personnel**

There are four members on the staff at Hadley Park Branch. Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, full-time librarian at the branch, is in an administrative capacity and is responsible to Dr. R. S. Alvarez.

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¹American Library Association, Co-ordinating Committee on Revision of Public Library Standards, op. cit., pp. 34, 35.


³Interview with Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, op. cit.
director of the Nashville Public Library. Mrs. Lockert has finished three years of college at Fisk University and Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tennessee. She has 18 hours of professional library training and 18 years of library experience.1

Mrs. Carolyn Savage is the part-time library assistant at the branch. She is a senior at Tennessee State University and is minoring in library service. Mrs. Savage's special duties are filing registration cards, shelving books and sending out over-due notices.2

McKinley Rucker is the full-time bookmobile librarian. He has a bachelor of science degree from Tennessee State University and has nine months of library experience. His duties are driving the bookmobile and circulating books.3

Thomas Lewis is part-time bookmobile and branch assistant. He is a student at Fisk University and is taking some courses in library service. He does the clerical work and assists the bookmobile librarian.4

According to the standards for library personnel recommended by the American Library Association, all members of the Hadley Park

1Ibid.
2Ibid.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
Branch come under the classification of non-professional staff members, but the staff has been "chosen for competence to perform their respective duties."¹

Salaries have not been adequate to attract professional personnel. The two full-time librarians' annual salary is $2,520 each, and the part-time librarians receive 80 cents per hour.² The American Library Association recommends that "non-professional personnel should receive pay comparable with that received for similar work under similar conditions in the locality."³ Full-time staff members in the library system have been given vacation allowances of one month annually, but there have been no other welfare benefits, such as, insurance and pensions. At the time of this writing, the City Council has passed a bill making the Nashville Public Library a department of the city.⁴ Passage of the bill will make it possible for the city to begin making plans for the provision of other welfare benefits and more adequate salaries which will "insure job satisfaction and high morale for all staff members of the library system," as recommended by the American Library Association.⁵

¹American Library Association, Co-ordinating Committee on Revision of Public Library Standards, op. cit., p. 40.
³American Library Association, Co-ordinating Committee on Revision of Public Library Standards, op. cit., p. 43.
⁴Interview with Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, op. cit.
⁵American Library Association, Co-ordinating Committee on Revision of Public Library Standards, op. cit., p. 41.
Financial Support

The total cost of building and equipping the Hadley Park Branch was $43,900 which came from the sale of the Negro Branch in 1949. There is no specific amount set aside for the operation of the Hadley Park Branch, because Negro citizens may borrow any materials from the main library. Expenditures for the operation of Hadley Park Branch are not kept separate from the main library expenditures but are included in the report as a whole.¹

Nashville has not adequately supported its library system according to the number of persons it serves. In an interview with Dr. R. S. Alvarez, he stated that the Nashville Public Library was a private corporation which operated from public funds. The budget for 1956-1957 was $170,000. In 1956, $180,275 was spent for the operation of all library units, but the extra amount came from an accumulated balance which was being saved to build a new branch library. Of the $170,000 budget, $130,000 was contributed by the city, $32,500 was contributed by the county, and $7,500 was contributed by the state. The budget for 1957-1958 was $168,720. The last year's appropriation of $130,000 from the city funds was cut to $125,000; $32,500 being contributed by the county; $3,720 appropriated by the federal government, and $7,500 provided by the state. Dr. Alvarez stated that the library had always operated on an inadequate budget.² The annual income of the library based on the recommended $1.50 per capita population by the American Library Association,³

¹Interview with Dr. R. S. Alvarez, op. cit.

²Ibid.

³American Library Association, Committee on Postwar Planning, op. cit., p. 62.
should give The Nashville Public Library, with its 360,000 persons to serve, a budget of at least $540,000. The library had a budget of $168,720 for 1957-1958 from all available sources.

**Use of the Library**

The Nashville Public Library units including the main library, the bookmobiles, branches and booketerias serve all residents of Nashville and Davidson County. Readers' cards are not issued to Negro citizens at the main library, but they must have a card from the Hadley Park Branch to receive service at the main library. The reader's card may be used in the main library, branch libraries, the bookmobiles and booketerias.¹

The Hadley Park Branch is open Monday through Friday from 2:00 P. M. to 8:00 P. M.; Saturdays, from 10:00 A. M. to 4:00 P. M.; Sundays, (May-October), from 4:00 P. M. to 6:00 P. M. A special summer program, "Vacation Time is Reading Time" is planned by the library staff. It features a reading contest, scrap books, a puppet and doll show. Teenagers, children and adults may take part in the program.²

When the Hadley Park Branch opened in 1952, the circulation total for the year was 15,139, but there was a decrease in the circulation figures after that year (see Table 4). The librarian pointed out that the decrease might be due to the bookmobile, put into service the same year of the branch's opening, and which carries books to different sections of the city (see Table 5). By 1953, circulation figures at the branch decreased from 15,139 to 12,995. The bookmobile

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¹Interview with Mrs. Ophelia Lockart, op. cit.

²Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Juvenile</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>6,192</td>
<td>8,947</td>
<td>15,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>6,329</td>
<td>6,666</td>
<td>12,995</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>6,533</td>
<td>6,582</td>
<td>13,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>6,332</td>
<td>6,569</td>
<td>12,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>5,411</td>
<td>6,752</td>
<td>12,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>6,096</td>
<td>8,993</td>
<td>15,089</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 5**

BOOKMOBILE, HADLEY PARK BRANCH
SUMMARY OF CIRCULATION, 1952-1957

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Juvenile</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2,869</td>
<td>11,083</td>
<td>13,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>5,730</td>
<td>19,850</td>
<td>25,580</td>
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<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>5,992</td>
<td>21,953</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>6,082</td>
<td>24,250</td>
<td>30,332</td>
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<td>1956</td>
<td>5,562</td>
<td>21,414</td>
<td>26,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>3,721</td>
<td>19,158</td>
<td>22,879</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a\) Letter from Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, Librarian, Hadley Park Branch, Nashville, Tennessee, October 6, 1958.

\(b\) Ibid.
circulation total was 25,850 in the same year and showed an increase in circulation figures each year over that of the branch. Circulation figures for both units showed that children borrowed more books than adults (see Tables 4 and 5). The loan period for most books is 14 days. Readers' cards are issued free, but children's applications for cards must be signed by one parent. Recordings may also be borrowed on the library card.1

The total circulation for all units of the Nashville Public Library including the main library, the bookmobiles, branches and booksterias was 532,164 for 1956. Records and film circulations were 21,060. The total number of borrowers registered during 1956 was 341,407. All departments of the main library experienced their peak year in 1956,2 but Hadley Park Branch reported that its peak year was experienced in 1952, the year that it was opened for service.3

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1Ibid.


3Interview with Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, op. cit.
CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

There is little documentary or printed material on the history of public library service to Negroes in Nashville. Some pertinent facts have been gathered, with the aid of Dr. Robert S. Alvarez, Director of the Nashville Public Library, and other members of his staff; Mrs. Ophelia Lockert, Librarian of Hadley Park Branch; Miss Martha Parks, Director of Public Libraries Division, State Library and Archives Commission; and other interested citizens who had some knowledge of the movement to get public library service for Negroes in Nashville.

Nashville is an important commercial and manufacturing center of more than 171,307 in population, of which the Negro population is 54,696. Nashville is popularly known as "The Athens of the South" because of its many buildings which are constructed on the Greek classical design and its large number of educational institutions. Its numerous industrial establishments afford a variety of occupations for its citizens. Negroes own and operate a few businesses in the city, and they are represented in almost all occupations of the city, but there are few Negroes in occupations which are in a high income bracket; therefore, the economic status of Negroes in Nashville is not comparable to that of whites.
Negroes have been admitted to the democratic primary, elected to the Nashville City Council and the City Board of Education; appointed to the Transit Authority, the Censor Board, the Housing Authority and the City Beautification Commission. Of the two taxicab inspectors, one is a Negro. There is one Negro deputy tax collector and one housing code inspector. The number of Negro policemen and firemen has been doubled since the year 1951.

Educational, recreational and cultural opportunities available to Negro citizens are not comparable to those provided for white citizens, but considerable progress is being made in some of these. Public schools in Nashville have been segregated by law and custom. During the school term of 1956-1957, the schools began integrating on a federally approved grade-a-year basis beginning with the first grade. However, at this rate, the plan will take twelve years before the integration of public schools in Nashville is completed. The colleges of Nashville have become integrated.

The first library of Nashville was established in 1844 as a mercantile library and became a free library in 1901 when it received a donation from Andrew Carnegie. Negroes were not allowed to use this library, although there was found to be no legal reason for preventing their use of it. It was in 1915, fifteen years after the establishment of Carnegie Library of Nashville, when the Library Board of Directors established some type of library service for Negro citizens of the city. The branch library was sold in 1949 when Negro citizens complained that it was located too far from Negro residential areas and adequate reading materials were not
available. The Board of Directors, after receiving several requests from Negro citizens, agreed to expand library service to Negroes by opening the main library to them in 1950, building a new branch library, and purchasing a bookmobile. The Board of Directors also agreed that there should be no publicity about the opening of the main library to Negro citizens. Negro readers were not invited to use the library, but the few who went were not refused any material for which they asked. There has been no indication of friction concerning the opening of the main library to Negro citizens; therefore, it is to be concluded that more publicity should be given this matter by Negro citizens. There should be weekly radio programs, discussion groups, and announcements made at public gatherings, designed to acquaint Negro citizens with the services available to them at the main library.

The main library and branches serve all residents of Nashville and Davidson County. The library is located near the center of the city, and readers can easily combine their shopping with visits to the library. It is marked by a neon sign at the front of the building. The inside of the building is inviting and well-equipped for comfort and for the rendering of service.

The Hadley Park Branch, opened in 1952 to Negro citizens, is conveniently located on a site which will permit expansion of the library should the need arise. It is also located in a residential section which is easily accessible to several schools, housing projects, and the Negro business section. The building is well-equipped with modern conveniences for comfort and has a cheerful,
inviting appearance.

It is apparent that Nashville has not given the financial support to its library in terms of the number of patrons it serves. There is a need for more income for the purpose of building additional branch libraries to serve the increase in population and to bring library facilities nearer the people. More income is also needed to buy additional books, to add to the periodical collection, to increase the size of the collection of other non-book materials, and to provide salary increases for all the staff. At the time of this writing, the City Council had made the library a department of the city. An advanced planning division of the Nashville-Davidson County Planning Commission is currently conducting a survey among library patrons in an effort to determine the areas of greatest need for branch library service, and to determine the amount of additional funds needed from the county so that county patrons will not be forced to pay individual library fees for library service.

Considering the decrease in the circulation figures of Hadley Park Branch, there is a need for more discussion groups organized among the Negro citizens. A survey should be made to find out the readers' needs and interests. Since the circulation figures show that the Hadley Park Branch is used more by children than by adults, special services for adults should be added, such as, a readers' advisory service. Their interest may be stimulated by the initiation of discussion groups, film forums, and by more publicity in the newspapers.
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**Reports**


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