

tem. This system seems to offer equality of opportunity, service, and economy.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Farmers ask nothing more along economic, educational, social, or other lines than equal opportunity with other groups. In library matters the county system gives them this because under this plan the people pay for what they receive and receive what they pay for. They receive according to what they pay, as do other groups. In the case of a library system supported by a county tax, equal-pay opportunity comes through taxation fixed by the people or by county-elected officials. Equal service is approximated through use of local branches and stations with transported and changing book supplies; advice and service of visiting trained librarian; and availability of central library. Equal control and management come through county-elected officials or their appointees.

In the case of contract libraries, county-elected representatives determine the county part of the library budget and have county representatives on the management boards, whereas the library gives service through branches and stations proportionate to the amount the county pays as determined by a management in which the county shares. A town with an existing library may come in or may stay outside of the system.

SERVICE

The taxable wealth of a large unit, the county, is behind the service of a county library. A large and well-selected book stock is available, in the selection of which rural interests are considered. Changing supplies of books, both general and agricultural, are transported directly to the farmer's home or neighborhood.

An expert librarian, who has had from one to three years of library-school training, directs the system, gives assistance in book selection, and offers expert advice to branch librarians and to library users on the days of her visits. This librarian cooperates with the county agent, county superintendent, and all rural organizations in the interest of the farmer's library welfare; she influences the lives of farm boys and girls; for men and women her educational and social influence is incalculable in country districts. Direct mail service from the main library is available to the most isolated farmer, and special books may be requested by telephone. Direct service at the central office is equally available. Service is given to any small-town library that may wish to preserve its identity. Schools are served with reference books, supplementary material, and books for children.

A larger proportion of the library funds are expended for service than for large buildings or for salaries of untrained librarians. Library service is made intimately known to country people who know little of city or State services and hesitate to use them when they are available. (Fig. 17.)

ECONOMY

library that will give better service and more nearly equal opportunities to farm people at less expense than does any other rural or small-city unit. A recent study of rural social institutions in Wisconsin, in which the United States Department of Agriculture cooperated, concludes that 4,000 population is the minimum for good library service at standard cost.⁶ Savings are made through (1) quantity purchases, (2) reduction of overhead cost of tools and operation, (3) lessening the accumulation of unused books, for if one group does not care for them another group may, (4) expert selection of books, including expensive reference books, (5) county service

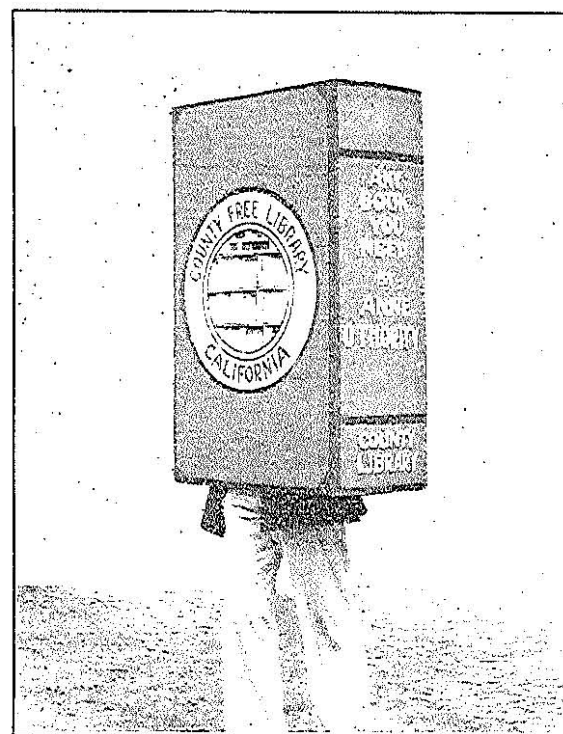


FIG. 17.—A county library display. Part of an armistice day anniversary parade

of a trained librarian, (6) free exchange of books, and (7) lowered building costs.

The experience of California and other States seems to prove that schools that are served with reference and supplementary books through the county library receive much better service at less expense than through any other method. Comparisons of rural county library service with service of libraries in small cities of similar populations indicate that better service is given in counties at considerable less expense than is given in such cities. Many small cities that have tried