IT'S YOUR LIBRARY

Missouri State Library
Jefferson City
BRANCH LIBRARY OR BOOKMOBILE?

If your library does not serve adequately all sections of the community, or town, some provision for extension of services may be necessary, such as a branch library or a bookmobile.

Before deciding on bookmobile or branch, however, consider whether an equal sum of money spent to strengthen the library you now have might meet the needs more effectively. Either form of extension will mean duplication of books and additional salaries. The people of your town might be better served by a single location offering greater service than by several small collections of books at various locations. Sometimes specialized services are needed, business or technical, or services to school children or to isolated groups of people. A careful study of this problem might cover the following points:

A. A survey of the community and the needs of each section.

B. Size (area and population) of neighborhoods needing added service.

C. Choice of type of service -- branch building or bookmobile.

D. Availability of other book services within the area: book stores, lending libraries, school and special libraries.

E. Type and extent of desirable specialized services.

F. Comparative costs of services, present and future.
Here are points to consider in deciding between branch or bookmobile:

THE BRANCH:

**ADVANTAGES**

1. Permanent quarters, well-located, can provide convenience of access, parking facilities, library service always in one place, and regular service for longer periods of time.

2. Space can be made for all types of readers and various types of service.

3. Book supply, larger than possible in a bookmobile, may duplicate much of the main library's collection for general reading, but can also be planned to include titles for special local needs.

4. Residents of the area will take pride in their library building and feel responsibility for its use and well-being.

**DISADVANTAGES**

1. Difficulty in securing desirable location.

2. Cost of buying (or renting) and maintaining quarters might be too large in proportion to its use and the size of the population to be served.

THE BOOKMOBILE:

**ADVANTAGES**

1. One unit can serve several locations. Regular schedules may be arranged, with length of each visit sufficient for each locality. Service can be brought close to the people. Location of stops can be changed whenever necessary.

2. Size and type of bookmobile may be determined by probable use, to include space for shelving of books and other printed materials, films, recordings, etc., as well as for borrowers and staff.

3. One collection of books can serve several neighborhoods and can be changed according to changing requirements of patrons. One staff is sufficient for all local visits of bookmobile. Cost of upkeep as well as original outlay for purchase is less than that necessary for branch buildings.

3. Need for duplication of book supplies and staff sufficient to give regular and specialized service.

4. Shifting population may require frequent change of location.

5. Small collections of books need constant refreshing, or users will feel they have "read everything."
4. A bookmobile is colorful, convenient for the general reader, attracts attention and stimulates use by new readers because of its mobility.

**DISADVANTAGES**

1. No specialized programs are possible; these must be held either at the main building or by arrangement at neighborhood meeting places, such as churches, schools, recreation centers, etc.

2. Except in an exceedingly large unit, materials must necessarily be limited.

3. Service is available for each location only for short periods at infrequent intervals.

4. Study and research by patrons are not possible owing to limitations on space and materials.

Standards for branch library buildings and for bookmobiles must be carefully studied. Also, close cooperation between the planning committee and local library authorities should be maintained at all times, for it is the librarian and her staff and trustees who through years of serving the community can best advise on the expanding program.

Further study can be made by reference to the following books and articles:

- PLD Reporter #7 (Spring 1958) - *Bookmobile Service Today*.
One of a series of guides prepared by the American Library Association for citizens who want to improve and extend the public library's use and usefulness for all the people.