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## TENTATIVE SPECIFICATIONS FOR BOOK AUTOMOBILES.

Book automobiles or book trucks or book vans are being increasingly used by county, township and city public libraries for displaying books as well as delivering them to branches, stations, schools and individual homes. Trucks of the commercial type are also used for delivery service, and passenger cars for visiting library agencies. But the book automobile proper has a special body, with shelving for books, built on a truck chassis. The first was used by the Washington County Library at Hagerstown in 1912, when its horse-drawn "book wagon" was replaced by a book automobile. Now at least 56 are in operation, in various sections of the country.

Types. Book automobiles fall into two large classes

- (1) shelves opening on the outside
- (2) shelves opening on the inside

Class 2 is used chiefly in the extreme north, as Hibbing, Minnesota, or Monroe County, New York. Class 1 is much the more usual type.

Make. Most of the trucks now in use are (in order) Dodge or Graham, Ford, Chevrolet. Pontiac and Reo are each represented by one, and there are two big busses, one a Brockway and one a White.

Tonnage. This varies from a half ton to 2 tons. The majority, however, are  $3/4$  ton.

Book capacity. On shelves, from 300 or 400 to 1500 or 1600. Always storage space for a good many more.

Chassis and body. Two quite different procedures are possible:

- (1) Using a regular truck chassis and building an entire special body.
- (2) Adaptation of a standard panel truck (cutting sides, installing shelves, etc.)

The special body can be made, or the regular body adapted, at the factory (special body department) or by a local wagon maker. The former would have to have an order for 25 to make a good price -- perhaps a possibility in the future, as there are 2800 counties still without county libraries.

Cost. Figures vary from \$900 to \$8000. A  $3/4$  ton truck with special equipment costs from \$900 to \$1200.

Needs vary. There can probably never be one best type of book automobile. Such local factors as climate, conditions of roads, topography, and size of territory served will inevitably influence details.

Pooling experience. With 56 in operation, however, it ought to be possible to learn from the experience of others and avoid costly mistakes. A beginning is made here, taking the commonest type -- a  $3/4$  ton truck, with shelves open to the outside.

Book automobiles -- Two

Tentative Specifications.

3/4 ton book automobile -- shelves outside.

Chassis and body

3/4 ton truck chassis with special body or standard panel truck with adaptations.

Side doors

Divided horizontally in two parts.  
Upper part to open outwards and up (if they swing to the side they are in the way of the readers).  
Braces or supports to hold them up.  
Cut down as close to the shelves as possible.  
Lower part drops to form a shelf.  
Two doors, at least, (three are better) to divide weight.  
Glass in doors, to show the books (Some librarians still prefer solid doors but the large majority want the books to show).  
Divided into smaller panes to avoid breakage, if doors are large.

Book shelves (both sides, just under the doors)

Face out.  
The bottom as low as possible, so that the top one can be reached.  
Built in two or three tiers or sections to avoid sagging.  
Number varies from 3 to 4. Three usually preferable.  
Depth 8 inches, distance between at least 9 inches. If possible one space should be 10 inches.  
Slight tilt back to keep books in place.  
Solid back.  
Sliding book supports to hold a varying number of books tight.

Back doors

3/4 should lift, 1/4 drop, to make a shelf to work on.  
Glass panels in part that lifts.

Magazine racks

Inside the truck, against the back of the shelves.  
On one side only.  
Slats every 6 inches,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches from wall.

Charging shelf

Hinged shelf near driver's seat, inside of right hand door.

Book automobile -- Three

Charging tray

Not built-in. Small movable desk tray satisfactory.

Cupboards

Just back of driver's seat. (For lunch box, small supplies, etc.)

Cupboards or drawers

Just above running boards. (For tools, supplies.)

Cab for driver

Enclosed - doors at right and left, with windows that open. Partition back of driver - with drop window.

Seats

For driver and one passenger.  
1 bucket seat and 1 folding type auxiliary seat.  
or (better) 1 long seat that might hold three.

Spare tire

- (1) Inside car, attached to rear of book shelves, resting on floor, or
- (2) Under the car, on horizontal rack at the rear.

Bolts and locks

All doors must fasten.  
One key to fit all doors.

Finish, color

Regular good automobile paint.  
Not too somber - one book auto was taken for a dog wagon.

Lettering

Name of library conspicuous -- letters large enough to be read at a distance.  
Indicate county and its name, even if service is from an established city library.  
Phrase "free service" desirable.  
Letter both sides and rear - Should also show when sides are open (a sign painted on both sides, securely fastened to top of car, is always visible.)

Book automobile -- Four

Miscellaneous

Self starter.  
Heater (for cold climates).  
Dome light.  
Shock absorbers.  
Rear steps.

Recommended by individuals

Steering wheel extra large.  
Large wheels, oversize tires.  
Extra leaves in springs.

Extra equipment used by some for group service (this would be bought separately).

Folding card table.  
Folding camp chair.  
Beach umbrella.