



The Public Library a living force for popular education (UNESCO 1949)

UNESCO and public libraries

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, has been created by the will of forty-six countries. Its aim is to promote peace and social and spiritual welfare by working through the minds of men. The creative power of UNESCO is the force of knowledge and international understanding.

This manifesto, by describing the potentialities of the public library, proclaims UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for popular education and for the growth of international understanding, and thereby for the promotion of peace.

The public library A Democratic Agency for Education

The public library is a product of modern democracy and a practical demonstration of democracy's faith in universal education as a life-long process.

Though primarily intended to serve the educational needs of adults, the public library should also supplement the work of the schools in developing the reading tastes of children and young people, helping them to become adults who can use books with appreciation and profit.

As a democratic institution, operated by the people for the people, the public library should be:

Established and maintained under clear authority of law.

Supported wholly or mainly from public funds.

Open for free use on equal terms to all members of the community, regardless of occupation, creed, class or race.

What the Public Library should offer

The complete public library should provide books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, maps, pictures, films, music scores and recordings, and give guidance in their use.



The public library should offer children, young people, men and women, opportunity and encouragement:

To educate themselves continuously;

To keep abreast of progress in all fields of knowledge;

To maintain freedom of expression and a constructively critical attitude towards all public issues;

To be better social and political Citizens of their country and of the world.

To be more efficient in their day-to-day activities;

To develop their creative capacities and powers of Appreciation in arts and letters.

To aid generally in the advancement of knowledge;

To use their leisure time to promote personal happiness and social well-being.

A vital community Force

The public library should be active and positive in its policy and a dynamic part of community life.

It should not tell people what to think, but it should help them decide what to think about. The spotlight should be thrown on significant issues by exhibitions, booklists, discussions, lectures, courses, films and individual reading guidance.

Reading interests should be stimulated and the library's services publicized through a well-planned continuous public relations programme.

The public library should link its activities with the work of other educational, cultural and social agencies—the schools, universities, museums, labour unions, study clubs, adult educational groups, etc.

It should also cooperate with other libraries in the loan of publications, and with library associations for the advancement of public librarianship.

The books in the library should be made accessible on open shelves and-by use of efficient technical processes; and the library's services should be brought close to the homes and work places of the people by means of branches and mobile units.

The People's University

With a well-trained, resourceful and imaginative staff; an adequate budget and public support, a public library can



become what it should be a university of the people offering a liberal education to all comers.

Citizens of a democracy have need of such opportunities for self-education at all times. The complexity and instability of life today make the need an urgent one.

What you can do

This manifesto has described the potentialities of the public library as agency for popular education. Obviously it is to your great personal advantage to have these potentialities realized in your community.

What can you do to help?

If your community does not have public library service:

- Interest your friends and neighbours and local organizations in obtaining such service;
- Ask your national library association or Ministry of Education what steps you should take to get public library service;
- Follow through on the action recommended.

If your community now has a public library:

- Get acquainted with the librarian;
- Find out what services are offered;
- Use these services;
- Work with the librarian to promote local support and demand for the standard of service endorsed in this Manifesto.

