

To the librarian of each of our traveling libraries:-

Our traveling library has now been some little time in your community. As librarian, you have had opportunity to observe and to promote its use by the people. You have more knowledge concerning its actual workings than this Commission can hope to have. We desire to profit by your experience.

Are you convinced that traveling libraries were needed? Does the use of the one in your community indicate a desire for books, and a corresponding lack of them? Are the people who read the books, people who had already acquired a taste for reading, and merely lacked means to gratify it? Have you succeeded in attracting the attention of any people who neither knew nor cared anything about books?

A traveling library ought to be sort of a missionary, and its chief mission, like that of the physician, not "to those who are well, but to those who are sick". That is, it ought to be so used that it will help create an appetite for good reading where none has previously been manifested. When once this appetite takes possession of people, they will have books, even if they have to get along with less of something else to do it. It may be unreasonable to expect the reading habit ^{appetite} to supplant the craving for new top-buggies or circuses, or even less commendable longings, but the person who learns to find the companionship of books pleasant and profitable will generally find that earlier and more material cravings are somewhat less insistent.

Going a step further, when once any considerable proportion of a community has acquired the reading habit, it is time to take steps to secure some dependable supply of good books. Any community capable of supporting a free public library is ready for one the minute enough of the people see the benefit they and their neighbors will derive from it. Few towns in Nebraska can adequately support public libraries. We regard the traveling library as a temporary solution of the problem for the great majority of Nebraska communities. When we contemplate even the number of incorporated towns and villages in the state, and reflect on the size of our appropriation, we see plainly that all that we can do is to use the few traveling libraries that we have to induce people to help themselves--to use our libraries as a means, not an end. We hope that the traveling library