

Nebraska Public Library Commission

Lincoln, Sept. 1902.

To the librarians of our traveling libraries:-

The condition of several traveling libraries that have recently come in makes it advisable to emphasize the necessity for greater care on the part of librarians and borrowers. Clean paper covers must be put on the books when you receive them, and fresh ones put on as they are needed. If borrowers return books looking as if they had been thrown in the street, or exposed during the rainy season, or handled by people who do not wash their hands, collect fines, or write for the price of the book so that the offender may buy a new copy for the library. Ask the teachers to tell the boys and girls how to take care of books. Hereafter, a book that is abused will have a slip inserted telling the name of the place where it was mistreated.

I wish to especially commend the care taken of the libraries that have just returned from Osceola, Harvard, Valley, Alexandria and Culbertson. Librarians and patrons at those places have shown that they value books and know how to use them.

Much depends on the packing. Wrap the books carefully and fill the boxes full of clean packing material. Some of the boxes look as if sweepings had been emptied into them.

The use of the library depends greatly upon the personality of the librarian. The modern library spirit requires that a librarian must be more than an indifferent machine, automatically handing out books. The librarian who fails to get the right book to the right borrower falls short of the highest measure of usefulness. If you find, in the library sent you, a book that may be of interest to a particular person, call his attention to it. Some books are in the traveling libraries for people to read, and others are intended to be used as tools. The progress of civilization depends to a considerable extent, on the intelligent use of books as tools. It is not

to be expected that anyone will want to read Maynard's Manual of North American butterflies, but someone in your community is interested in nature and can use this book as a tool to help him identify the butterflies of your neighborhood. Shaler's American highways will not have many readers, but you may know someone who can be led to take an interest in the movement for good roads and can help your neighborhood by getting that book into the hands of the right person. Wherever the traveling libraries have gone, I have made special effort to interest the teachers, but I regret to say that they have, as a rule, proven indifferent. The young people should be taught how to use books to obtain information -- they need little instruction as to using books for entertainment. If a traveling library brings to a village a book on the commercial geography of the United States, ask the teacher if she cannot use it as a help in geography. If it is too advanced in literary style to suit the comprehension of her pupils, suggest that she may find it very helpful if used in the schoolroom under her direction. In one of our libraries there is a beautiful book on the children of many lands. It was not used at all where it should have been a splendid supplement to the limited resources of the school library. A wide awake teacher can use almost any book as a help. If your teachers are not wide awake, can you not, by the exercise of intelligent tact, help them to realize that they are neglecting to teach the children to use every opportunity for advancement?

I am always glad to receive suggestions from the librarians, and hope you will write as often and as freely as time and inclination permit. Be assured that the Commission appreciates every effort you may make to secure the greatest possible use of the books with the best possible care.

Sincerely,

Edna D. Bullock, Sec'y.