

P r e f a c e

The following account of the founding of some of the smaller public libraries of the State of Illinois is offered as an answer to the question , " How can we found a public library in our town?"

While the State law first adopted in March, 1872 , is liberal in terms and exact in statement, local conditions often make some preliminary work necessary in order that the provisions of the law may be used to the best advantage.

The reports and pamphlets , published by Library Commissions, in States where they exist, explain practical methods which have been tried and found useful. Illinois has no Commission, and this paper is an attempt to encourage would-be founders of libraries by helping them to overcome the most usual difficulties.

Authorities.

- a , Making up the list of towns for consideration.
- b , Description of towns .
- c , Form.

a The chapters on library statistics and legislation in the report of the U. S. Commissioner of education for 1895-96, which were published separately in 1897, were used as a check-list in deciding which libraries to take up.

Notes of the more recent libraries were found in Public Libraries, 1896-99.

In 1897-98 , the Illinois State Library Association undertook to collect statistics of the libraries in the State outside of Cook county. Circulars with a list of questions were sent , from the State Library School, and the answers are being tabulated by a student of the school. Information gathered from these returns added other libraries to the number of sixty.

b For the description of the individual towns, the facts used have been obtained from U. S. Census reports, Lippincott's Gazetteer, Johnson's Universal encyclopaedia, edition of 1896, and reports from the libraries and townspeople.

c The form of the work and the general plan , while devised independently, resemble those of the report of the Vermont Library Commission for 1895-96.

It is to be hoped that a new impulse may be given to the keeping of careful, accurate records, in full from the beginning for every library. So many say that the existing records furnish only vague hints that something was done or attempted , but nothing definite can be learned. This might be a matter for local historical societies to work up.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the librarians and trustees on whose reports this paper depends for its value, and without whose aid it could not have been written, for their cordial cooperation .

M. E. S.