

Notes of Meeting September 21, 1968  
Drexel Institute of Technology,  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Organizing Meeting of Round Table on  
Social Responsibility of Libraries

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION  
OFFICIAL FILE

- I. What does social responsibility mean?
- II. What are our social responsibilities as human beings?
  - A. Are we going to function as people or as librarians, or can we function as both?
    1. It is easy for a person to be involved but difficult for a librarian.
    2. Librarians can not be involved because of a need to be non-partisan.
    3. If one takes a stand on anything, he becomes vulnerable.
    4. We should decide on which issues we can be partisan and on which issues we must remain non-partisan.
    5. We should support partisanship toward the betterment of the human lot.
  - B. The Round Table should deal with the part of the librarian that is not institutionalized.
    1. The institutions may be status quo institutions, but librarians should become involved in the Round Table on a personal basis; particular institutional goals are irrelevant to this personal involvement.
    2. A librarian, as a professional, should be an individual aside from the institution for which he works.
  - C. The Round Table should also deal with what one does as a librarian, as a professional within the institution.
    1. What are the social responsibilities of libraries or librarians?

- III. What are the social problems of the library, or of librarians?
- A. The Library is not involved in the total community. We are too concerned with adult education.
  - B. Librarians do not know the community leaders or community agencies.
  - C. At colleges and universities the administration is responding, but librarians are not.
  - D. We must show we can do something; stop functioning in a vacuum.
  - E. The public library is a castle where librarians wait for people to enter; the library should be an octopus. Librarians should infiltrate the Garden Club. Other librarians are closer to change than the public librarians.
  - F. At universities, student unrest is a social problem.
  - G. Urban decay is a problem.
  - H. ALA is not addressing itself to social problems.
- IV. What should be the functions of a Round Table on the Social Responsibilities of Librarians?
- A. To change existing institutions?
  - B. To provide an answer to the question: How can I as an individual, give support to institutions and to specifics?
  - C. To bring together ideas and support the ideas.
  - D. To attract and involve younger, less active, members of ALA.
    1. To provide a vehicle for expression. Young people want somehow to express themselves professionally.
    2. To raise money to send young librarians to meetings.
    3. To reach young librarians and let them know we can help them.

E. To provide a forum for people to ask questions, such as How does one approach decentralization? and to help provide solutions to the questions.

1. To provide an opening for the thing ALA buries.

F. To influence ALA.

1. Find out how ALA conceives of its social responsibility through divisions.

2. Examine ALA programs and actions.

3. Make recommendations through ALA.

G. To collect the fragments of what has been done by ALA and bring them together.

H. To provide a referral service.

1. Bring together people with similar problems to find solutions.

I. To make the library relevant and responsive to social problems.

V. Priorities of the Round Table.

A. Raise money to send younger people to convention.

B. Pursue an issue that will get young people involved in a cause.

C. Go to the ALA membership to find out what the social problems are.

1. Get the Round Table established in ALA.

2. Put pressure on COO and on the President of ALA to establish the Round Table.

D. Investigate other avenues, if the Round Table is refused.

E. Ask local associations to make statements on establishment of the Round Table.

F. Prove a need for the Round Table's existence.

- G. Get some regional activity going before the summer of 1969.
- H. Develop interest and convince people we really mean business.
- I. Set up demonstrations of what the Round Table would do.
- J. Concerns are clear but they will have to be defined.

VI. To be done now.

- A. Start regional or local get togethers.
- B. Alert people to what is being done, so they will go to convention.
  - 1. Geography is with us. Midwinter in Washington, D.C.; Convention in Atlantic City.
  - 2. Schedule a meeting after Council II at Midwinter.
- C. New York will have a pilot meeting with all interested librarians to discuss the relevancy of libraries to race in New York libraries of all types--school, college, university public libraries and library schools. How does racism affect libraries and what can we do about it?
  - 1. Find out where pressure should be applied in New York City.
  - 2. Seek a direction that the Round Table can take on the issue of race.
  - 3. In June suggest what ALA should do based on the results of the pilot program.

VII. Relationship of the Round Table to ALA.

- A. The Round Table wants to help ALA go farther.
  - 1. Committee on Intellectual Freedom wants to move ahead, but there is not enough support from the membership.
- B. How can ALA help the librarian who is in trouble?
  - 1. Does ALA provide lawyers on questions of intellectual freedom?

2. Does ALA impose sanctions when a librarian has been forced to resign?
  3. Could ALA take money from other areas to use, in such cases, for lawyers fees?
- C. What we deal with at the Round Table level may prevail AIA Council in five years.
1. ALA Council is not now representative of the young minds; young people are not reached. Ideas are important, not age.
  2. We must shorten the lag between what needs to be done and the problem that we know exists.
- D. ALA says the focus should be on priorities.
1. Social responsibility is a priority.
- E. ALA has not responded to the burning issues of the day.

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