In the 1920s and early 1930s, public libraries in South Carolina were among the most underfunded and poorly administered in the United States. Since Jim Crow laws were still in effect, only white citizens had access to public library facilities in many parts of the state. After the Works Progress Administration (WPA) began its Library Demonstration Project in 1933, library conditions improved drastically. However, the WPA effort accomplished relatively little for the state's black population. It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that black South Carolinians began making significant progress toward gaining access to public library services. This paper examines the evolution of public library services in South Carolina from the 1930s to the 1960s, treating the development of services for blacks and the development of services for whites as largely distinct processes.

Headings:

African Americans and libraries -- Southern states.

Library extension -- Southern states.

Public libraries -- South Carolina -- History.

United States. Works Progress Administration. South Carolina.

"A MATTER OF SELF-PRESERVATION": THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC
LIBRARIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA FROM THE WPA TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS
MOVEMENT

by
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Introduction

The state of public library service in South Carolina in the late 1920s and early 1930s was, by any measure, abysmal. In 1930, South Carolina had the highest rate of illiteracy—close to 15 percent—of any state in the nation[1], and in 1935 it ranked 46th nationwide in terms of library development. Of the southeastern states, only Mississippi ranked lower[2]. A major impediment to the development of libraries in South Carolina, as in many southern states, was the segregation of black and white citizens in public life. This segregation resulted in two separate, not-quite-parallel, trajectories of library expansion in the state. White libraries developed earlier and more rapidly than black libraries, which had fewer financial and human resources to rely on. This paper examines the growth of public library service in the state of South Carolina between the late 1920s and the 1960s, focusing on the largely separate evolution of libraries for blacks and for whites, as well as the places where library development for both races intersected.

Prior to World War II, library development in South Carolina clustered primarily around the urban centers of Columbia, Charleston, and Greenville (these three county seats were home to the headquarters of the only county-wide library systems in the state) and rural areas were

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[1] Dan R. Lee, "From Segregation to Integration: Library Services for Blacks in South Carolina, 1923-1962." In *Untold Stories: Civil Rights, Libraries, and Black Librarianship*. (Champaign, IL: Publications Office, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1998) 93.

[2] Edward B. Stanford, *Library Extension Under the WPA: An Appraisal of an Experiment in Federal Aid*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944) 148.

overall grossly underserved. In 1926, library service was completely nonexistent in 10 of the state's 46 counties, meaning that some 250,000 South Carolinians had no access to public libraries whatsoever.[3] Of the 56 public libraries that did exist, all were inadequate in terms of service and equipment, and only a small percentage were publicly funded.[4] Most relied on subscriptions or donations from civic organizations like women's clubs. There was no active state library board; a board was established in 1929, but it was a largely symbolic action, since the board operated without funding until 1943.[5] Where they existed, library "systems" were largely unorganized and appallingly inefficient. Even as late as 1940, Dr. R. F. Kirkpatrick of Anderson County complained in an editorial[6] in the *Anderson Daily Mail* about the lack of streamlining in the libraries of Anderson County, writing that "it has meant a duplication of library service that is to be deplored, especially in view of the fact that not a single one of our school libraries nor our public library for that matter, is able to render adequate service to its patrons, due to insufficient financial support."

South Carolina's lack of public library facilities was not due to public indifference—there was a good deal of interest in the issue. In 1934 a Citizens' Conference on the Library Needs of South Carolina was held at Clemson College. It was a meeting of librarians, academics, and civil servants, convened to discuss possibilities for improving the state of library service in South Carolina. The conference proceedings show that library access in South Carolina was severely deficient, but that the population in every part of the state represented by conference attendees was enthusiastic about the idea of increased library service. Farmers, mill workers, and others who made up the largely poor, uneducated population were eager for reading

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[3] Mary E. Frayser, *The Libraries of South Carolina*. (Clemson, SC: South Carolina Agricultural Experiment Station, 1933) 12-13.

[4] Stanford, *Library Extension*, 149-150.

[5] Lee, "From Segregation to Integration," 102.

[6] R. F. Kirkpatrick. "More Support Needed For Anderson Library Service." *Anderson* [S.C.] *Daily Mail* 13 Nov. 1940. In the South Carolina County Library Project Scrapbook, 1940-1942, South Caroliniana Library.

material that spoke to them about the realities of their lives. They wanted access to the

information and entertainment found in books, and the better-educated, well-to-do members

of their communities were just as eager to provide it to them. It was emphasized that a healthy

democracy depended on the literacy and intelligence of its constituents. In the words of

conference attendee J. Marion Wright, "The state as a matter of self-preservation must provide

some basis for the formation of intelligent opinion by the man who goes to vote."[7] Conference

attendees discussed the possibility of federal aid for South Carolina libraries, and were generally

in favor of it. They acknowledged that the South as a region had traditionally been loath to

accept any sort of assistance from the federal government, though they probably needed it

more than anyone else.

A discussion of library services in South Carolina during the 1930s and subsequent

decades cannot ignore the fact that there were two distinct populations being served (or rather,

underserved) by public institutions such as libraries—blacks and whites existed in largely

separate worlds, at least in terms of public services. If library services in the white community

were inadequate, their counterparts in the black community were deplorable. Overwhelmingly,

the early efforts that developed to increase service to each community did not overlap. It is

interesting that, during the 1934 Citizens' Conference, library service to black South Carolinians

was explicitly mentioned only once—Fannie Taber, librarian at the Greenville Public Library, was

asked if her system provided service to black patrons, and she responded that yes, there was a

branch in the system designated specifically for their use.[8]

Black libraries had considerably fewer resources than white libraries, and early efforts to

improve them were largely undertaken by private citizens and philanthropic organizations. As a

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[7] A. B. Bryan, ed. *Proceedings of the Citizens' Conference on the Library Needs of South Carolina*. 4-5 January 1934, Clemson College. Clemson, SC: Clemson College Library, 1934. 24.
[8] *Citizens' Conference*, 18.

result of this disparity, library access for whites increased much more quickly and efficiently than access for blacks. Though some efforts existed ostensibly to improve services for both races, most notably the Works Progress Administration (renamed the Works Projects Administration in 1939) (WPA)'s Library Demonstration Project, social and legal realities in South Carolina kept progress in the black community moving at a much slower pace.

South Carolina's miserable library conditions were hardly exceptional. Library services of the early twentieth century in the United States in general and in the South in particular left much to be desired. In 1934, across the United States, only Massachusetts and Delaware provided library service to their states' total population. That year, Massachusetts spent $1.08 per capita on library services, while Mississippi and Arkansas spent only two cents per capita.[9] Because of the South's high levels of poverty, relatively uneducated and rural populace, racial inequalities, and its agricultural economy, cultural and educational progress there was slow. Another obstacle to library development was a fact that arises again and again in the study of the provision of public services in the Jim Crow South—that of the legal necessity for duplicate, parallel systems to serve white and black residents, and state governments' unwillingness and/or inability to afford the construction of separate and truly equal facilities.

Literature Review

The problems of libraries in the American South have long been recognized and investigated by public-library advocates. In 1930 the American Library Association (ALA) opened a regional field office in Atlanta and appointed a regional field agent to serve as an advisor to the region's libraries. This person would be "an experienced librarian, who knew the conditions

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[9] Martha H. Swain, "A New Deal in Libraries: Federal Relief Work and Library Service, 1933-1943." *Libraries & Culture* 30.3 (1995): 265-283.

of the area and who was competent to give direction and focus to the diverse activities in progress in a rapidly evolving library program."[10] Tommie Dora Barker was appointed field agent in 1930, and in 1936 she published *Libraries of the South*, a report on many aspects of librarianship and library services in the South, including public libraries, college and university libraries, library schools and librarian training programs, the disparity in library services offered to blacks and whites, and more. Over the course of her study, Barker found that of the thirteen southern states (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia), none contained a population lacking access to public library service of less than 40%. In two states, Arkansas and West Virginia, the percentage of residents without public library access topped 80%[11]. Barker reported on not only problems but on positive developments as well, including a newfound zeal for library education in the South and the establishment of public libraries by philanthropic organizations such as the Julius Rosenwald Fund and the Carnegie Corporation. The study examines emerging trends in library development and administration across the region and makes recommendations for the future, such as the establishment of state library agencies where they do not exist, passing legislation that supports libraries, the consolidation of municipal library systems into regional systems, and engaging public libraries in adult education.

Barker attended the Citizens' Conference at Clemson College. There, she laid out her vision for a complete program of library service to the state of South Carolina. Its components were:

1) A state library extension agency, to administer library development and maintenance of existing libraries;

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[10] Tommie Dora Barker, *Libraries of the South: A Report on Developments, 1930-1935*. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1936) v.
[11] Barker, *Libraries of the South*, 5.

2) Local library service, supported from public funds, organized by county or region with access for all people;

3) School library service, closely integrated with county library service;

4) A body of library legislation, which makes provisions for development of this program;

5) A state system of certification of librarians; and

6) Facilities for professional training of librarians either within the state or the region.[12]

Barker's vision would not come into being in its entirety for some time; however, in the approximately ten years between the conference and the end of World War II, significant developments would take place in South Carolina that would bring her ideal much closer to reality than ever before.

While Barker was conducting her study of the South as a whole, Mary Frayser, an educator who worked with the Agricultural Extension Service, published "The Libraries of South Carolina," a 1933 report based on data gathered by Parmelee Cheves, the South Carolina State Library Board's field agent, between 1930 and 1932. Frayser's report shows that South Carolina's libraries were grossly underfunded and under-equipped, and that many of the state's residents, particularly African Americans, had no access to library service at all. For example, while 39% of white elementary schools had no form of library, a staggering 91.1% of black elementary schools reported a similar deficiency.[13]

In her landmark 1941 study *The Southern Negro and the Public Library*, Eliza Atkins Gleason revealed that blacks across the South faced similarly discouraging library conditions.

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[12] *Citizens' Conference*, 15-16.
[13] Frayser, *The Libraries of South Carolina*, 28-29.

She found that only eleven "independent Negro libraries" existed in the entire region, and that none of these were administered by the governments of the cities of counties in which they were located. [14] Gleason examines the historical background of library provision to blacks in the South, noting that as early as 1903, some southern public libraries began establishing Negro branches or offering limited services to black patrons at existing branches.[15] She acknowledges, however, that despite a few notable cases where libraries were made available to blacks early in the twentieth century (in Charlotte, NC; Memphis, TN; and Galveston, TX), library development for blacks in the South generally lagged far behind the (also sluggish) development of libraries for whites.

In the absence of public funding and governmental support for African-American libraries, black South Carolinians found ways to gain access to rudimentary library services. Dan R. Lee has explored the library options of South Carolina's black citizens, including an article on Faith Cabin Libraries,[16] which were community-supported reading rooms and book collections that provided free access to books in African-American communities. Lee has also written about the evolution of library service for black South Carolinians in the years immediately preceding, during, and following the operation of the WPA.[17] Lee traces library service to African Americans from its infancy to the end of segregated public libraries in the 1960s.

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[14] Eliza A. Gleason, *The Southern Negro and the Public Library*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941) 154-155.

[15] Gleason, *The Southern Negro*, 19.

[16] Dan R. Lee, "Faith Cabin Libraries: A Study of an Alternative Library Service in the Segregated South, 1932-1960." *Libraries & Culture* 26.1 (1991): 169-182.

[17] Dan R. Lee, "From Segregation to Integration: Library Services for Blacks in South Carolina, 1923-1962." In *Untold Stories: Civil Rights, Libraries, and Black Librarianship*. Champaign, IL: Publications Office, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, 1998. 93-109.

Michael Fultz approaches the development of black libraries in the South from a modern perspective, examining the evolution of black library development in the South from the earliest years of the twentieth century through the civil rights movement of the 1960s.[18] Fultz examines the establishment of black library schools at the Hampton (VA) Institute and Atlanta University. He traces the process of integration of southern public libraries, noting that it happened more quickly than school integration. He also points out that desegregation was initially only nominal, with libraries granting access to blacks because of mounting social and legal pressures, but limiting their privileges or modifying the libraries' physical facilities to make them less accommodating. [19] Fultz calls public libraries, with their frequently centralized locations and ethos of free access to education, "prime symbolic targets"[20] for civil-rights protesters. Fultz reveals a grudging support that developed among whites for allowing blacks to use libraries, which was often based on other forms of prejudice. Some whites had no objection to allowing blacks to use public libraries because the idea of their children looking for books alongside black children was less threatening than the idea of exposing them to the more intensive social interaction that takes place in schools. There was also a pervasive idea that only the more genteel, educated class of blacks would want to come to the library, so there was less to fear from them.[21]

The WPA library project in South Carolina has been studied as a successful example of library expansion, notably by Edward Barrett Stanford in 1944 and by Robert Gorman in 1997. Stanford's study shows how the economic and social problems in South Carolina made it fertile ground for a successful intervention by the WPA. He examines patterns of WPA library

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[18] Michael Fultz, "Black Public Libraries in the South in the Era of De Jure Segregation." *Libraries & The Cultural Record* 41.3 (2006): 337-359.
[19] Fultz, "Black Public Libraries," 346.
[20] Fultz, "Black Public Libraries," 348.
[21] Fultz, "Black Public Libraries," 349.

development in the state, and he looks at the differences between existing black and white libraries, as well as the reasons why the WPA was a much greater success for white library development than black library development[22].

Robert Gorman's 1997 article "Blazing the Way: The WPA Library Service Demonstration Project in South Carolina"[23] is a thorough overview of the WPA library project in South Carolina with a brief review of how the South Carolina project fit into the larger goals and operation of the WPA. Gorman emphasizes the fact that the WPA effectively accelerated library development in the state at a rate which probably would have been impossible without its intervention. He explores the ways in which the project accomplished this objective, including the development of centralized technical-service and reference operations and the widespread use of bookmobiles. [24] Gorman also examines the legacy of the project, including the funding of the state library board and the transfer of responsibility for statewide library operations from the WPA to the board.[25]

Analysis

The entity that did the most to increase library service in South Carolina during the first half of the twentieth century was inarguably the WPA. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the predecessor to the WPA, created a special professional division intended to provide workers for mostly white-collar, non-construction jobs. This division employed more women than other facets of FERA; the division remained intact when FERA

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[22] Stanford, *Library Extension*, 179-184.
[23] Robert M. Gorman, "Blazing the Way: The WPA Library Service Demonstration Project in South Carolina" *Libraries & Culture* 32.4 (1997): 427-455.
[24] Gorman, "Blazing the Way," 436-437.
[25] Gorman, "Blazing the Way," 447.

became the WPA, and it was this "women's" division that provided nearly all of the workers for the WPA library efforts in South Carolina and elsewhere.[26]

The WPA succeeded in providing, albeit in some cases rather limited, library service to every county in the state of South Carolina. Only two counties, Charleston and Richland, had public libraries in existence when the project began that were not expanded by the WPA.[27] When the Library Demonstration Project began in South Carolina in 1935, it essentially performed all the functions of a state library agency. The project's purpose was not to assume control of library operations in the state, but rather to provide temporary assistance in facilitating the establishment of permanent, tax-supported libraries. Once a library became tax-supported and was able to hire a professional librarian, the WPA would continue to provide nominal support, but would shift its monetary and personnel resources to needier areas.[28] The administrative structure of the statewide project consisted of a state supervisor, an assistant state supervisor, district supervisors, assistant district supervisors, and area project supervisors. The project offered centralized (at the statewide level) as well as local offices for technical operations such as acquisitions, cataloging, and book repair.[29] Books in library collections were either provided on loan from the WPA, were purchased by local boards of education, or were donated by community groups. Since only five percent of workers on library projects were allowed to be professional, supervisory staff, nearly all of the library workers provided by the WPA project were not credentialed and were unfamiliar and inexperienced with library operations.[30] However, some library workers hired by the WPA went on to take courses in library science, and to become professional librarians. The 1938-1939 annual report of the

[26] Gorman, "Blazing the Way," 429-430.
[27] Works Progress Administration, South Carolina. *Annual Report: Statewide Library Project. July 1938-July 1939*. Columbia, SC: 1939.
[28] WPA, *Short synopsis of projects*. Pages unnumbered.
[29] WPA, *Annual Report, 1939-1940.*
[30] Gorman, "Blazing the Way," 431.

WPA's South Carolina library project details several "success stories" and testimonials of paraprofessional workers who were able to provide for themselves and their families using the skills they gained as WPA employees, and it heavily emphasizes the efforts the project administrators have made to make workers employable in the long term.

The WPA library demonstration project continued to operate full-force in South Carolina (and on a national level) until 1941, when the loss of available male workers created by the advent of World War II compelled the entire WPA to scale back its efforts. In 1942, WPA library programs were reorganized as War Information Services Programs, and librarians were told to promote libraries as centers of information on the war.[31] Though the WPA effort was stymied by the war, many librarians and library advocates used the war as a springboard for advocating for government-funded library service, stressing the need for an informed citizenry during a time of crisis. Librarians also managed to use the war as a way to promote leisure reading, as demonstrated in an article[32] from the *Gaffney Ledger* about "Gloom Chasers," humorous, light-hearted books that they encouraged citizens to seek out when they had enough of the "weighty and distressing subjects" of government, economics, and philosophy.

There were two distinct patterns of WPA library demonstration service in South Carolina—service in areas that already had existing public libraries, and service in areas that had no public library facilities whatsoever.[33] Virtually no cities in South Carolina were economically prosperous enough to support an independent municipal library. For this reason, and because of the state's high concentration of its population in rural areas, public library systems were organized at the county-wide or regional (two or more counties combining to create a library

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[31] Swain, "A New Deal," 278
[32] "Library Notes: Gloom Chasers." *The Gaffney* [S.C.] *Ledger* 27 Nov. 1941. In the South Carolina County Library Project Scrapbook, 1940-1942, South Caroliniana Library.
[33] Stanford, *Library Extension*, 162.

system) levels. Local governments were quick to see the practicality of this approach, and even as responsibility for library administration shifted away from the WPA, governments sought to develop library systems according to county-wide and regional models. In counties where a public library already existed, the WPA structured its library demonstration project to incorporate the existing library as the system's headquarters or main branch. In some counties or regions where no public libraries existed, the WPA tried to develop a county-wide library system, but abandoned the effort when it became clear that the area lacked the resources to sustain a full-scale system. In these areas, efforts were instead made to staff and provide materials to local reading rooms. In some small towns, such as Batesburg and Manning, existing libraries that had been closed for some time were able to reopen with WPA funds.[34] Overall, the WPA's efforts in communities where they were able to build upon existing library service were, unsurprisingly, more successful than efforts that started with no foundation.

Bookmobiles and traveling libraries comprised a substantial part of the WPA effort. Less costly to operate than stationary branches, they were the most efficient means of serving rural areas. In many counties where there were no branch libraries for blacks, bookmobiles served black schools and deposit stations, often outside the cities. The cost of bookmobile service was frequently shared by the WPA and local governments. In Chester County, for example, the county managed to purchase their WPA-rented bookmobile in 1939, but the WPA continued to pay for its gas and oil.[35] In Anderson County, the public library was supplemented by a bookmobile that was jointly financed by the WPA, the county Board of Education, and donations from various other organizations. The bookmobile traveled between 40 and 45 miles daily, and with a circulation of over 3,000 books per month, was well-received by the rural population of

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[34] WPA of South Carolina, *Recent Library Development*. Pages unnumbered.
[35] WPA of South Carolina, *Recent Library Development*. Pages unnumbered.

the county. The idea of a bookmobile or "circulating library" was described during a radio

broadcast by Sara Vandiver, the Anderson County chairwoman of library publicity, as "one of the

most progressive and worthwhile projects that has ever been undertaken in Anderson County. It

ranks in forward steps with the paved farm-to-market roads and rural electrification."[36]

Vandiver mentions that a tri-county (Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties) traveling library

unit was proposed at the 1934 Citizens' Conference at Clemson College, with the idea that it

would be sponsored by a tax. She claims that the plan "fell through, mainly because of

opposition from people in urban areas, who already had library facilities." It was a sad paradox

that although the majority of South Carolina consisted of rural areas, all the economic and social

power was concentrated in the few cities. However, the fact that rural people had long been

starved for library service created a highly receptive atmosphere in which the WPA library

demonstration project could gain widespread support.

In 1943, the WPA library project in South Carolina came to an end. The State Library

Board was able to secure an appropriation of $3,000 to establish an office and fund its operation

for the last third of the 1943 fiscal year. The following year, the state legislature appropriated

$15,000 to the board, and it stepped in to take over the roles that had been previously

performed by the WPA. Nancy Blair, who had served as director of the statewide project,

became the board's first Executive Secretary.[37]

Public library service in South Carolina during the early decades of the 20th century was

unfavorable across the entire state; however, the state's black population was provided with far

fewer library resources than its white population. In 1933, there were 56 public libraries in

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[36] "Broadcast by the Anderson County Council of Farm Women in the Interest of the Anderson County Circulating Library." WAIM, Anderson, SC. 8 Aug. 1940. Radio. Transcript in the South Carolina County Library Project Scrapbook, 1940-1942, South Caroliniana Library.

[37] Walker, *So Good and Necessary*.

South Carolina. Of these, only four offered services to blacks.[38] Racial segregation was sometimes explicitly written into a library's access policy, but often was simply taken for granted without being officially stated. State and local governments had little incentive to address the problem. The majority of elected officials had long viewed the issue with either indifference to the need for change or with reluctance to create antagonism among white citizens by expending resources on library service for blacks—since Jim Crow was still very much a reality in South Carolina at that time, blacks and whites sharing existing library facilities would have been out of the question. Such attitudes being held by public officials often had the effect of limiting service to both blacks and whites. In a particularly egregious example of this phenomenon, in 1905 the Charleston Library Society turned down the offer of library funding from Andrew Carnegie, because of the fear that accepting the funding would obligate the library to provide service to the general taxpaying public, which included members of both races. Black Charlestonians eventually secured library service in 1927—much earlier than blacks in most parts of the state— thanks to the efforts of Susan Dart Butler, a black minister's daughter who turned her family's Dart Hall into a reading room for black residents. For four years, Butler ran the library by herself, opening it only nine hours per week. It was eventually made a branch of the Charleston County Free Library in 1931.[39]

In the 1920s and 1930s, most South Carolina libraries that existed for use by blacks were located inside of school buildings, which created several problems. Many of them were open to the public only a few hours every day, after the school day ended. Since the libraries were paid for by the same monies that funded the public schools, they could not afford to hire professional librarians, and most were staffed by one or more teachers from the adjoining

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[38] Gorman, "Blazing the Way," 428.
[39] Lee, "From Segregation to Integration," 94-95.

school donating their time. Housing public libraries inside of schools, or opening school libraries to the general community, was a common practice for white as well as black libraries in South Carolina in the early twentieth century, but blacks often depended on this service exclusively while whites more frequently had additional, separate public library facilities, and school libraries providing service to the community did not receive extra funding to support those efforts. More abstract problems existed as well; Eliza Gleason, in *The Southern Negro and the Public Library*, writes about the issue of a "psychological barrier" that is created in the mind of the adult when he is expected to use a facility that is primarily intended for the instruction of children.[40]

With no official supply of funds, those who sought to supply the black community with reading material had to rely on piecemeal approaches to library development. Resources for implementing library service to blacks came from a variety of sources, most of them private philanthropic organizations or grassroots efforts. During the 1930s, books were provided to many black libraries in South Carolina by Harvey D. Kelsey, a black philanthropist and South Carolina native living in Washington, D.C.[41] In 1929, the Julius Rosenwald Fund granted funds to two South Carolina counties, Richland (Columbia) and Charleston, for library expansion, with the stipulation that service be extended to blacks as well as whites.[42] These projects did meet with some success; however, since the two counties cannot be considered representative of the general state population in terms of education and wealth, it is doubtful that those particular Rosenwald projects could do much to affect library service in South Carolina as a whole.[43] In 1932, a white mill worker named Willie Lee Buffington began what would become a 30-year

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[40] Gleason, *The Southern Negro*, 136.
[41] Stanford, *Library Extension*, 183.
[42] Gorman, "Blazing the Way," 429.
[43] Stanford, *Library Extension*, 149.

program that saw over 100 libraries built in black communities in South Carolina and Georgia.

These "Faith Cabin" libraries, which were supported primarily by religious and civic

organizations, installed library collections in buildings that were either near or connected to

black schools in communities that had no other options for library access.[44] The WPA provided

some workers to Faith Cabin libraries where they existed.

Another resource that greatly helped in the operation of Faith Cabin libraries were

Jeanes Supervising Industrial Teachers, or Jeanes teachers, as they came to be known. The

Jeanes Foundation was begun by Philadelphia philanthropist Anna T. Jeanes shortly after the

turn of the twentieth century, with the intention of devoting its resources "solely to the

assistance of Rural, Community, or Country schools for Southern Negroes." Jesse T. Anderson,

South Carolina State Superintendent of Education, wrote in 1949, "If any one group of people

could be singled out as having done more toward improving the Negro schools than any other, it

would undoubtedly be the Jeanes Teacher."[45] That year, there were 34 Jeanes Teachers in South

Carolina in as many counties. Jeanes teachers, among their other contributions, helped in the

WPA effort in South Carolina by delivering books to schools and rural libraries.

South Carolina's WPA library demonstration project accomplished regrettably little for

the state's black population, though not because of a lack of awareness or interest on the part

of those involved. In order to accomplish their principal objective of establishing permanent

libraries in South Carolina, it was necessary to deploy their resources as strategically as possible.

The annual report for 1939-1940 made by the South Carolina project to the national WPA

administration claims that the expense of maintaining separate library units for blacks was a

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[44] Lee, "Faith Cabin Libraries," 169.
[45] Jesse T. Anderson, "History and Development of Negro Education in South Carolina." (Columbia, SC: State Department of Education, Division of Instruction, 1949) 11. In the Negro Library Service Files, South Carolina State Library.

deterrent to building them. The same report claims that one goal of the project for the 1940-1941 year was to "increase library facilities available to near illiterates of both races."[46] Stanford provides a useful table[47] of statistics, reproduced below, showing a side-by-side comparison of library service for whites and blacks provided by the WPA as of March 1941:

Item	White	Negro	Total
Number of units operated	392	25	417
Personnel:			
Certified workers	624	28	652
Supervisors	36	0	36
Total	660	28	668*
Number of counties assisted	46	12	46
WPA-operated county bookmobiles	29	0	29
Bookstock:			
Purchased by WPA	19,826	477	20,303
Owned by counties	396,618	35,027	431,645
Total	416,444	35,504	451,948
Adult	230,265	24,727	254,992
Juvenile	186,179	10,777	196,956
Registration:			
Adult	72,314	3,339	75,653
Juvenile	79,639	6,763	86,402
Total	151,953	10,102	162,055
Total circulation 7/1/38-6/30/39	3,729,967	157,110	3,887,077
Estimated population served	573,403	46,920	620,323

*Figure included in table. The correct total is 688.

There were 392 library units (broadly defined as an independent library, a school with circulating library collection, a bookmobile, a deposit station, or reading room) that served whites in operation; by contrast, there were 25 that served blacks. Because of the county- and region-based library organization in the state, even those systems that provided black branches were of limited utility to black residents, some of whom might live 5-10 miles from the one branch they were permitted to use, and many of whom had no personal form of transportation.

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[46] WPA, *Annual Report, 1939-1940*, 23.
[47] Stanford, *Library Extension*, 158.

It was not until 1949 that the South Carolina State Library Board officially took over

responsibility for providing library service to black residents,[48] at least nominally.

What the 1930s and 1940s were for white libraries in South Carolina, the 1950s and

1960s were for black libraries. With increasing urbanization and the decline of the state's

agricultural economy, segregation became more and more difficult to maintain. However,

progress was gradual. Old attitudes were slow to fade. Estellene Walker, Executive Secretary of

the South Carolina State Library Board, wrote a letter to Gertrude Wolff, the editor of *Junior*

Libraries (later *School Library Journal*) magazine, responding to Wolff's request for information

on library service to blacks in the state. Walker replied, "We will be glad to send you the

information on library service for Negroes in South Carolina if you will let us know exactly how

you plan to use this information. We have purposely avoided all publicity about the

development of this service since we hope to accomplish it without incident and without

comment."[49]

In 1955 there were only four libraries in South Carolina that were "open to both

races."[50] Walker explained, in her July 21 letter to Wolff, why, in her opinion, library service for

blacks failed to develop:

> "the slow development of library service for Negroes is due to the Negro's lack of
> interest in library service. Where a request has been made for the service, it has usually
> been extended. Except in those libraries which have had Negro library service for the
> past twenty years, there is little use made of it by the Negroes. I expect that this is
> because there are so few books written by, for, and about the Negroes and on subjects
> in which he is interested. In the county libraries of Richland, Orangeburg, Greenville and
> Charleston counties where the service has been established for twenty years or more,

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[48] "State Library Board Inaugurates Book Deposit Service For Negroes." *South Carolina Library Bulletin* 4.2 (1948): 2-3.

[49] Estellene Walker. Letter to Gertrude Wolff. 24 June 1955. In the Negro Library Service Files, South Carolina State Library, Columbia, SC.

[50] Estellene Walker. Letter to Gertrude Wolff. 21 July 1955. In the Negro Library Service Files, South Carolina State Library, Columbia, SC.

the picture is somewhat different and the libraries are used to a considerable extent. In general, the children are the heaviest users of the service though it is hard to judge from circulation statistics, since so many adult Negroes read juvenile books."

Walker previously stated, in a letter[51] to Anna Holden at the Southern Regional Council, that another obstacle to the development of library service for blacks was the fact that "white-collar" blacks looked down upon lower-class blacks. She wrote, "One of our difficulties has been in getting the Negroes at the top of the social scale to be interested in or to want to help the Negroes with less education or with less social standing. This has been an amazing revelation to me...Appearantly [sic] the white collar workers among the Negroes have a feeling of scorn for their brothers in the cotton field and care little that they receive any benefits of service or of education." She claims, in the same letter, that blacks do not value library service that is given to them unsolicited—they only value the service when they have had to work for it. Walker's attitude toward library service for blacks in her state appears to change depending on the person to whom she is describing it. She shifts between a defensive claim that library service for blacks already exists and is therefore unworthy of any special emphasis, and the disinterested—even hostile—stance expressed above, essentially shifting the burden of responsibility for library development (and therefore the blame for its overwhelming nonexistence) onto the black community itself.

During her tenure as Executive Secretary (1946-1968), Walker appears to have been surprisingly ignorant of the realities of library access for black residents of her state—it is difficult to ascertain, however, how much of her attitude is genuine ignorance and how much is a territorial desire to protect the operations of the state library board from outside scrutiny. In 1961, she denies a graduate student's request for information on library integration, citing a

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[51] Estellene Walker. Letter to Anna Holden. 21 Jan. 1953. In the Negro Library Service Files, South Carolina State Library, Columbia, SC.

ruling adopted by the state library board that only individual libraries could release information about their integration status.[52] In 1947, Walker engaged in a brief correspondence with Willie Lee Buffington, founder of the Faith Cabin Libraries. She wrote to him asking for information on the libraries, which he provided, in detail. In 1950, she wrote a letter to a librarian in Raleigh, N.C., referring to an active Faith Cabin library in Calhoun County.[53] However, in 1952, responding to a request for information about the Faith Cabin libraries, she claims, "So far as I know there are no active Faith Cabin Libraries in South Carolina. Service to Negro residents is given through the regular public library systems."[54]

Walker also claimed that the Richland County Library was the first library in South Carolina to integrate, and that it did so in 1952. The truth, however, is not so straightforward.[55] As late as 1960, black patrons of the Richland County Library, though permitted to enter the main library building and use its materials, were required to register for library cards at the library's Waverly Branch, which was built in an area containing two of the city's historically black colleges, Benedict College and Allen University. Black Richland County residents staged a protest in April of 1960 in an attempt to secure privileges to register at any branch of the library's system. Lucy Hampton (Mrs. Hagood) Bostick, Richland County Librarian, publicly and vehemently criticized the protest as "stupid" and "pointless," claiming that "Negroes have used this library for 30 years...they just want publicity."[56]

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[52] Estellene Walker. Letter to Dr. Virginia Lacy Jones. 31 Oct. 1961. In the Negro Library Service Files, South Carolina State Library, Columbia, SC.

[53] Estellene Walker. Letter to Mollie H. Lee. 25 May 1950. In the Negro Library Service Files, South Carolina State Library, Columbia, SC.

[54] Estellene Walker. Letter to Amanda Love. 25 April 1952. In the Negro Library Service Files, South Carolina State Library, Columbia, SC.

[55] Lee, "From Segregation to Integration," 103.

[56] "'Demonstration is stupid'—librarian," *The Charlotte Observer,* 29 April 1960. In the Negro Library Service Files.

In 1960, there were several significant attempts to integrate the Greenville City Library. In March of that year, a group of 15-20 black students, accompanied by two black ministers, entered the main library and proceeded to sit at tables and browse through library materials. After library board member F. Dean Rainey asked the group to leave and suggested they visit the library's McBee Avenue branch, which served black patrons, one of the young women in the group replied that the books they wanted were not at that branch. When Rainey said that the books could be sent from McBee Avenue to the main branch, the girl replied that this delay would be unacceptable, and that they wanted the books immediately.[57] The library closed early that day, but otherwise the incident was unremarkable. Another demonstration later that month, however, ended with seven black students from nearby Sterling High School being arrested.[58] In July, eight black college students from various parts of North and South Carolina staged a sit-in at the library and were arrested. Nearly two months later, a group of black residents filed a lawsuit against the library in a federal district court. The library's response was to close for two weeks so that when the case was being heard, it was not considered a functioning institution and the case was dismissed.[59] When the library eventually reopened in late September, it did so as an integrated library—though after its racial integration, the library began to segregate patrons by sex, establishing separate (and presumably equal) reading areas for men and women.[60]

Sit-ins occurred elsewhere in the state, notably in the cities of Sumter and Florence. A 1961 attempt to integrate the Carnegie Public Library in Sumter ended with the arrest of 23

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[57] Ruth Walker. "Group of young Negroes enter Greenville Library." *The Greenville* [S.C.] *News* 2 March 1960. In the Negro Library Service Files.

[58] "Negroes face trials for library incident." *The* [Greenville, S.C.] *Piedmont* 17 March 1960. In the Negro Library Service Files.

[59] "Negroes use Greenville Public Library." *The* [Greenwood, S.C.] *Index Journal* 20 Sept. 1960. In the Negro Library Service Files.

[60] "Library rules out mixing by men, women." *The* [Spartanburg, S.C.] *Herald* 23 Sept. 1960. In the Negro Library Service Files.

protesters, mostly black college students. Just like in Greenville, the students asked for a book and were directed to the library's African-American branch, located in a high school. The students refused to leave and the police were called. The integration of the Florence Public Library occurred in 1962 without significant incident—peaceful sit-ins prompted the library to quietly integrate. [61] Most other libraries in the state integrated relatively peacefully, and by the early 1970s black branches of South Carolina library systems were all but defunct.[62]

Conclusion

The development of South Carolina's public libraries was hindered from the beginning by a number of unfortunate conditions. The influence of widespread poverty and a lack of emphasis on public education meant few opportunities and not much institutional support for library development. Adding to the difficulties were laws and social mores that kept blacks and whites living in separate public spheres. Blacks were obviously disadvantaged by this system, but so were whites—had there been no expectation of controversy surrounding the establishment of libraries for black citizens, white citizens would have gained more libraries earlier and quicker than they did. The WPA did the state a great service when it initiated a library demonstration project there. Its acceleration of library expansion set the stage for continued development. The WPA was unfortunately restricted in what it could do by the prevailing social and legal climate, but without its assistance, it is difficult to imagine when or how the public library effort in South Carolina would have truly gained momentum.

The WPA deserves credit for kick-starting the growth of South Carolina's public library systems; however, after the WPA effort ended, black citizens were, in many places, no better off

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[61] Lee, "From Segregation to Integration," 105.
[62] Lee, "From Segregation to Integration," 106.

in terms of library services. Denied access to public funding for libraries, members of the black community and those sympathetic to their plight made use of the resources at their disposal to create what makeshift libraries they could—Faith Cabin libraries, public libraries inside school buildings, rural deposit stations—throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. As time went on, two facts became increasingly apparent. One was that those meager reading rooms and book collections that had been many black South Carolinians' only options for free reading material were unacceptably inadequate. Another was that white South Carolinians in certain parts of the state were not going to offer blacks access to "their" libraries without being pressured. Once blacks in South Carolina began insisting on their right to use publicly-funded library facilities, the libraries eventually had no choice but to cave to the increasing pressure of the nationwide civil-rights movement and integrate. Only then did South Carolina's public libraries become truly public institutions.

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