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State of New Jersey,  
Department of Education,  
Division Against Discrimination,  
Newark

NEW JERSEY STATE LIBRARY



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REPORT OF THE LIBRARY STUDY ON EMPLOYMENT OF  
MINORITY GROUP PERSONNEL AND SERVICES OF LIBRARIES TO MINORITY GROUP PEOPLE

Background of Study

The Division Against Discrimination has, from time to time in the last six years since its creation, conducted surveys in various fields to determine employment practices of, and services to so-called minority groups. At the request of county councils against discrimination, surveys of employment practices of private industries have been carried out in eight different counties with the cooperation of employers. At the present time, such a survey is being made in Hudson County at the request of the State Commission on Civil Rights.

Two years ago a survey of 85 general hospitals in the State was made with the cooperation of the N.J. Hospital Association. This survey secured interesting information not only concerning the placement of minority group professional people in the hospital picture, but also the hospital services rendered to members of minority groups. A by-product of the surveys was the changed policy which resulted in many hospitals toward minority group professional people and the extension of various services in a number of areas. The employment surveys have also resulted in changed policies. Other surveys have been made of segregated schools and retail stores.

In 1950 the N.J. Library Association appointed a Committee on Human Relations. A sub-committee was appointed to evaluate children's books in order to build better human relations. This Committee has been working for the past year and will report at the Library Association Convention on April 19th and 20th. At this time, the Committee on Human Relations will also give its report. This report will include a survey of library practices made by the Division Against Discrimination at the request of the N.J. Library Association. This survey was conducted in order to secure information concerning library services to minority groups as well as the employment of minority group people by libraries.

A definition of minority groups as considered by the survey follows:

"A minority group person is to be interpreted as an individual who by reason of race, religion or national descent may occupy the less favorable economic or social positions in your community. In one community the minority group or groups may be Negroes and Puerto Ricans, while in another, the Jews. In still another community, Protestants or Catholics may be the minority group or groups. In others, national origin groups such as Italians, Poles, Germans, Czechs, Chinese, Japanese or East Indians may sometimes be the minority group. In some communities the same group may always constitute the minority."

Procedure and Techniques of Study

After considerable ground work by the N.J. Library Association, which sponsored the survey, the questionnaires, accompanied by a letter of explanation and endorsement from the N.J.L.A., were sent out. The survey was conducted by mail except for a few visits by staff to large libraries. The emphasis throughout the survey tends to be on the position of the Negro. This was inevitable because of this minority group's discernibility, which made information more easily available. Italians were named specifically as a minority group despite the fact that some communities did not consider them as such.

Questionnaires returned gave a fairly complete picture on Negro employment. Figures concerning Jews and Italians, as well as other national origin groups, are incomplete. The reason given by libraries is that other so-called minorities no longer come under the minority classification as defined by the Division. Libraries also state that no employment records are kept as to race, religion or national origin and that minority group people, other than Negroes, are not usually discernible. Hence this report tends to give information primarily on Negroes. Inconsistencies appear in some questionnaires. This is probably due to a misunderstanding of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, such questionnaires have to be disregarded in tabulating findings.

### Library Personnel

The first attempt of the survey was to determine what constituted the employment picture. The questionnaires were sent to 52 libraries; 47 replied. Of these 52, 46 were public libraries, 6 were college libraries. The 52 libraries were selected because they employed over six people and so came within the limits of the Fair Employment Practices Law. The 47 libraries surveyed employed 1,528 persons; 1,454 were white, 74 were Negro.

Of the 486 professional librarians, 468 were white, 8 were Negro. The 8 Negro professional librarians are in four libraries, one in each of three, five in one library. There are 346 non-professional librarians employed, of which 313 are white and 8 Negro.

Students working in libraries are 270 white and 11 Negro. In maintenance, 135 are white and 33 Negro. Most librarians state their employment policy is non-discriminatory. Two libraries reported they have had professional Negro librarians in the past but none at present. Several others report they would accept Negro librarians if qualified. One librarian only, reports that the "problem" has never arisen but that there probably would be hesitancy in employment of a Negro librarian.

The library employing 46 Negroes of a total of 293 employed, stated that five are employed in a branch in a large Negro community where the total staff is 10 and non-professional Negroes are distributed throughout other branches and in the main library. The total professional librarians employed are 86 in this library, Negro professional librarians five.

### How Employed

The question has been raised as to whether, in most communities, the employment of Negro librarians has any discernible relationship to minority pressure groups, civil rights commissions or community programs for non-discrimination. There appears to be no relationship except perhaps in the city employing 46 Negroes from a staff of 293. This is the most highly organized in the State as far as intergroup relations are concerned. It also has a civil rights commission and has had a school program in good will and human understanding for a number of years.

The Human Relations Committee of the N.J. Library Association is attempting to secure information as to the number of Negroes trained throughout the country as professional librarians. It also would be very interesting to secure information as to the number of Negroes taking Civil Service examinations for library positions.

It is very important that 8 professional Negro librarians have been placed in New Jersey. All of these have been selected from Civil Service lists. This would seem to indicate that more Negro professional librarians should be induced to take Civil Service examinations. Thirty libraries select from Civil Service lists and the library or library board selects employees in 17.

### Board Membership

It is interesting to note that from a total of 270 reported serving on library boards, none are Negro, nor are any Negro professional librarians appointed in the 17 libraries where the board makes the selection.

### Use of Libraries

Ten libraries report large national origin group population but claim no discrimination against these groups. Most librarians consider Negroes the only group to which our definition of minorities applies but report no discrimination in services or use of library. Twelve libraries report moderate use of libraries by Negroes, 6 frequent use and 18 same use as by other people, which would indicate use by 36. Libraries not reporting use by Negroes are generally in towns of small Negro population. Figures are again incomplete concerning use by other minorities.

The survey indicates a wide use of libraries by community organizations for the observance of special programs. Among the groups requesting programs and exhibits are B'nai B'rith, N.A.A.C.P., Urban League, Federation of Polish Organizations, United Nations Association, Hadassah, Jewish Community Relations Committee, Negro ministers, A.A.U.W., National Conference of Christians and Jews, local human relations councils, welfare councils, mental hygiene societies, Social Security agencies, inter-racial relations clubs, Jewish Council of Women and other Negro, Jewish and national origin organizations. The types of exhibits displayed either on requests of organizations or through the initiative of the library itself, are many and varied. Brotherhood Week is most frequently observed, being reported by 14 libraries. Others observed include Hanukkah, United Nations Week, Catholic Book Week, Religious Book Week (NCCJ), Jewish Book Month, Negro History Week, Red Cross Campaign, Minority Book Week and Americanism Book Week. Exhibits include books about human relations and minority group peoples, portraits of notable representatives of minority or national origin groups; books, portraits and handicraft by minority and national origin group peoples. One library sends us programs and portraits of its "United We Grow" exhibit. This library reports that 32 national origin groups live in the community as well as Jewish and Negro population. Fourteen libraries report news stories on human relations programs and exhibits. Five report editorials and three use of pictures. Twelve give names and dates of publications. Reports would indicate a close integration of the library programs with community population and organization; that libraries are doing a fine service job and are alert to special occasions and their observance. Not included in human relations observance listing, but which definitely tie in with any community human relations program, is the observance of all special holidays both religious and patriotic and others not classed as such, like Boy and Girl Scout Weeks, Physically Handicapped Week, Fire Prevention Week, Saint Patrick's Day and many others.

### Comments

There are a few comments we would like to quote as follows:

"Am very much interested in human relations and feel that the only way to overcome the difficulties of 'minority groups' is to treat everyone as a human being and judge them by their individual qualifications. . . As to staff, I do not ask questions about religious affiliations when hiring anyone."

From a second: "No discrimination in service, but would probably be some in employment of Negroes. The problem has never arisen."

And a third: "Librarian was chosen by B'nai B'rith as the 'WOMAN OF THE YEAR' for 1950, for her outstanding work in promoting brotherhood."

### Recommendations

This is a brief summation of facts as gathered from the questionnaires. On the whole, the questionnaires were well-handled and gave the community as well as the library picture. There are, however, a few questions we would like to raise.

Are the few minority group librarians employed because minority persons are neither trained nor available to the local library, or is it because the mores of the community put a restriction on librarians or boards, even where Civil Service selection is made? This might be a profitable field for study.

Another field would be what part school guidance counsellors play in directing minority group persons to library training and stressing the library as a career opportunity.

Is there any relationship between lack of minority persons serving on boards and the employment practice of the specific library?

Are librarians and boards as a whole familiar with the State Fair Employment Practices provisions of the Law?

No comment has been made by libraries as to the competence of minority group personnel. However, most librarians' attitudes are generally receptive to fair employment practices. Much more could be done through the use of the local press and other media of publication.

In the fields of public relations and human relations, the librarians recognize the responsibility of the library to minority groups. A splendid beginning has been made by libraries in stressing the cultural and literary contributions of minority group people. Much more could be done along this line. Books and exhibits to build better human relations could be made a yearly, instead of a monthly or weekly, program. We find, however, little relationship in the employment picture to the community population picture and also in appointment of board members.

We suggest a special committee be appointed by the Human Relations Committee of the State Library Association to initiate a continuing study of what libraries are doing in this field and to prepare a minimum program for libraries in the State, in order to make the fullest possible contributions to the community.