

NETnews

St. Louis Regional Library Network

November 1990 Vol. 3 No. 2

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Readers -- Demographics -- Trends

by Kevin Ray, Washington University Libraries

America has never been a country preoccupied with literacy except in the most basic, and economic, of senses. Its people must be capable of reading. This is no fiat, however, on actual use.

Still, many Americans do read for more than instructions. It is one of their many pleasures... though one among many, low and high, and recent statistical reports can help us understand the who, what, and when, if not exactly the why of our national reading habits. One especially, conducted by the University of Maryland, and summarized by John P. Robinson for American Demographics (May 1990), is the Art-Related Trend Study (ARTS), a nationwide telephone survey that measures the use Americans make of various media, printed and electronic alike.

The survey served largely as a confirmation of the researchers' thesis, that use of printed media has decreased over the last forty years, with the prevalence of easy, quick access to information through maturing electronic media. Taken together, reading of printed matter in the three formats (books, magazines, and newspapers) decreased by 30%. But individual formats have not fared equally, and newspapers have suffered most from electronic competition. Eighty-five percent of Americans surveyed in 1946 reported regular newspaper readership, a figure that slipped to 73% in 1965 and slipped further still, to 55% by 1985. This decline, Robinson reports, is evident (and remarkably constant) "in every consumer segment, regardless of age, education, family type, or employment status."

Magazine readership has also suffered a decline, but one less severe. Thirty-eight percent surveyed in 1946 reported reading a magazine with some regularity, a figure which dropped a full ten percentage points over the next few years but has remained relatively steady since the 1950s.

It is only in the book readership that a turnaround occurs, with Robinson's group reporting that the percentage of Americans surveyed who read a book on a typical day actually increased from 20% in 1946 to 25% in 1985. The study, however, does not distinguish this readership by category, genre, or format. Changes in book publishing, perhaps more than changes in readers' habits, may account for this increase, but the influence of publishers' marketing strategies, paperback books, chain bookstores, etc. fall outside the scope of the survey.

(Continued on page 2)



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Among the demographic "predictors" Robinson describes, that is, traits or characteristics of readers which have statistical relevance, age and education prove decisive, at least in determining the amount of time an individual is likely to spend reading. Persons with a grade-school education responding to the survey reported on the average 1.8 hours per week spent reading, while persons with a post-graduate education reported an average of 4.4 hours per week. Importantly, these figures exclude reading done while working, eating, or doing other activities, indicating that it is time dedicated specifically to reading, increasing the likelihood that such reading, whether fiction or non-fiction, is non-compulsory -- a thing done for the pleasure of doing it.

Age and education are far from the only "predictors", and the survey acknowledges that many other factors play significant roles in the amount of free (i.e., unstructured) time an individual might have to devote to any given activity; and parents of young children may find the following observation especially salient:

"Married people read slightly more than average, while the widowed read more than married people. The never-married read less than average, and the divorced or separated read much less than average. Parents of preschoolers read less than average, particularly mothers with more than one preschool child."

Statistics, of course, do lie, and frequently, but as a rough sketch of how Americans live, even a survey on so focused a subject as reading habits opens a window onto a host of truths and partial truths we easily recognize.

Werner Gundersheimer: Director, the Folger Shakespeare Library

The St. Louis Mercantile Library Association is pleased to welcome Werner Gundersheimer, the Executive Director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., to its First Wednesday, December 5, 1990, Lunch and Lecture Series. Dr. Gundersheimer will be speaking on "Merchants and their Minds: Thoughts on Philanthropy and Profit." The Folger Shakespeare Library, a premier American independent research library with unparalleled collections relating to Shakespeare, renaissance, and reformation studies, has been a national treasure for the last half century. Its many programs including performances, lectures, rare book exhibitions, and publications have heightened its visibility significantly over the years. The Folger Shakespeare Library has recently not only increased its vast collections relating to the bard and his world, but has finished an ambitious building and fundraising program.

The lecture is free; membership in the Library is not required. Reservations for attendance must be made by December 3, 1990. Call 314/621-0670 for reservations or more information. Cost of box lunch (in advance) for members-\$6.50; for non-members-\$10; cost (at door) for members-\$10; for non-members-\$12.50. Send check payable to St. Louis Mercantile Library, Box 633, St. Louis, MO 63188 Mastercard/Visa accepted. Lunch is from 12:15-1:15 p.m., in Sixth Floor Reading Room of the Library at 510 Locust St., St. Louis.

LIBRARY AUTOMATION: PRESENT AND FUTURE

Friday, December 7, 1990

ST. LOUIS COUNTY LIBRARY HEADQUARTERS BRANCH
1640 S. Lindbergh Blvd

in the Auditorium

1:00-3:30

SPEAKERS

Shirley K. Baker, *Dean of Libraries, Washington University*

Donell J. Gaertner, *Director, St. Louis County Library*

Jeanine Prickett, *Supervisor, Library Systems, Monsanto Company
Information Center*

Frederick J. Raithel, *Automation Consultant, Missouri State Library*

MODERATOR

Loretta H. Stuckl, *Associate Director for Technical Services and Networking, Washington
University Medical Library and Biomedical Communications Center*

Join us for a panel presentation on the current status and future direction of library automation in the St. Louis area. Each of the speakers will address the topic within the context of his/her library. Issues to be discussed include building an automation infrastructure, networking and other linkages to local and national systems, controlling collections in various locations, sharing library services and resources, support systems, and planning considerations.

WINTER MEETING, 12-7-90

Please return registration form to:

Regina McBride
Eden-Webster Library
475 E. Lockwood Ave.
St. Louis, Mo. 63119
(314) 968-7151

NAME _____

INSTITUTION _____

TELEPHONE _____

**Academic Libraries Section
Greater St. Louis Chapter
Catholic Library Association**

FALL MEETING

Saturday, December 1, 1990

10:00 - 12:00 A.M.
302 Morrissey Hall
St. Louis University School of Law
3700 Lindell Blvd. at Spring

**ABILA OF THE DECAPOLIS: 4,500 YEARS OF ANCIENT
CIVILIZATION**

Dr. W. Harold Mare

*Professor of New Testament and Director of the Archaeological Institute
Covenant Theological Seminary, Creve Coeur, MO*

All Chapter members, guests, and friends are invited to attend this most unusual program. Dr. Mare, an eminent Biblical scholar, archaeologist, and author who has taught at Covenant Seminary since 1963, will present a slide lecture on his ongoing excavations of the ancient city of Abila of the Decapolis in northern Jordan. Abila was the chief city of the tetrarchy of Abilene, and is mentioned several times in the New Testament. It was continuously inhabited from the third millennium B.C. until about 1500 A.D.--that is, from when the Egyptian pyramids were new down through the Jewish kingdoms, the Roman and Byzantine empires, and well into Islamic times. Dr. Mare has agreed to show us a selection of artifacts, coins, pottery, and other objects from these various periods which his team has brought back from Abila. Thanks to the work of Dr. Mare and his colleagues, we are learning more about the history of this part of the world, as well as gaining a deeper understanding of our Judeo-Christian heritage.

This past summer the St. Louis University Law School Library completed an extensive project to renovate, relocate, and expand its facilities in Morrissey Hall, including constructing a bridge to an adjacent building. Our program will conclude with a tour of the "new" Law Library, including enlarged stack areas, offices, and an impressive new computer lab. This will be a meeting you won't want to miss. Mark your calendars now!

A \$2.00 charge for non-members will be collected at the door.

For further information, call (314) 658-3093.

FAX NUMBER DIRECTORY

Anheuser-Busch Companies Library
(314) 577-2006

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Missouri Library
(314) 658-4809

Booker Associates Research Center
(314) 421-1741

Doane Marketing Research Library
(314) 878-7616

East Central College Library
1 (314) 583-5195, ext. 2432

East Alton Public Library District
(618) 259-0788

Eden Webster Library
(314) 968-7113

Edwardsville Public Library
(618) 692-9566

Envirodyne Engineers Library
(314) 426-4212

Ferguson Florissant School District
(314) 831-1525

Ferguson Municipal Public Library
(314) 521-1275

Harris-Stowe State College
(314) 533-0916

Jefferson College Library
(314) 789-4012

John Burroughs School Library
(314) 993-6858

Kirkwood Public Library
(314) 822-3755

Ladue School Libraries
(314) 994-0441

Laumeier Sculpture Park Library
(314) 821-1248

Lindenwood College Library
(314) 949-2000, ext. 378

Logan College Library
(314) 227-8503

Lutheran Church-MO Synod Library
(314) 822-8307

McDonnell Douglas Libraries
Information Systems
(314) 232-0513

McAir Libraries:
Engineering
(314) 232-0790
Research
(314) 777-1328
Electronics
(314) 925-4736

Astronautics
(314) 233-6187

McDonnell Corp. Library
(314) 777-1012,777-1494

Maritz Inc. Library
(314) 827-3220,3221,3222

Maryville College Library
(314) 576-9590

Missouri Botanical Garden Library
(314) 577-9521

Missouri Institute of Psychiatry Library
(314) 644-8839

Monsanto Information Center
(314) 694-8748

Parks College of St. Louis University
(618) 332-6802

Parkway North High Library
(314) 851-8362

Parkway Schools Library Center
(314) 469-8546

Pet Inc. Information Center
(314) 622-6565,6528

Petrolite Corporation Library
(314) 968-6290

Principia College Library
(618) 374-5107

Ralston Purina Co. Library
(314) 982-1078

Reorganized Jefferson R-7 School Libraries
(314) 937-9189

Richmond Heights Public Library
(314) 645-2154

Ritenour School District Libraries
(314) 426-7144

St. Charles City-County Library District
(314) 441-3132

St. John's Mercy Med. Library
(314) 569-6910

St. Louis Art Museum Library
(314) 721-6172

St. Louis College of Pharmacy
(314) 367-8700, ext. 284

St. Louis Community College
Forest Park Library
(314) 644-9240

Instructional Resource Center
(314) 652-9269

Florissant Valley Library
(314) 595-4544

Meramec Library
(314) 984-7117

St. Louis County Library
 (314) 994-3300, ext. 227
 St. Louis Mercantile Library
 (314) 621-1782
 St. Louis Public Library
 (314) 241-4305, 3840
 St. Louis University-Med Library
 (314) 772-1307
 St. Louis University-Pius Library
 (314) 658-3108
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 (314) 647-7969
 St. Luke's Hospital Med. Library
 (314) 434-4129
 Saul Brodsky Jewish Library
 (314) 432-1277
 Scenic Regional Library
 (314) 583-3274
 SIUE Library
 (618) 692-2381
 University City Public Library
 (314) 727-6005
 University of Missouri-St. Louis
 Thomas Jefferson Library
 (314) 553-5853
 Washington University-Law Library
 (314) 889-6493
 Washington University-Med Library
 (314) 367-9547
 Washington University-Olin Library
 (314) 889-4719
 Webster Groves Public Library
 (314) 961-4233
 Whitfield School Library
 (314) 434-6193

Washington University Libraries

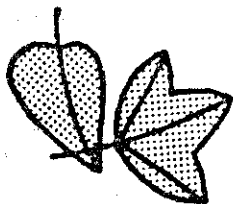
to have May Swenson papers

May Swenson, the acclaimed American poet who died in December 1989, has bequeathed her papers to Washington University, it was announced by Shirley K. Baker, Dean of University Libraries. The Libraries began collecting Ms. Swenson's work in 1964 as part of its Modern Literature Collection and holds a complete run of her publications and many of her poetry worksheets, other manuscripts and correspondence, including an extensive sequence of letters with poet Elizabeth Bishop. The material acquired now will complete the picture researchers will have of her remarkable writing and publishing career.

May Swenson was the author of nine collections of poetry, a book for children, and a translation of the verse of Swedish poet Tomas Transtromer. Her work has been honored with numerous awards, including the Bollingen Prize, the Shelley Memorial Award, a Brandeis University Creative Arts Award, and Guggenheim and Rockefeller fellowships. She was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1970 and became chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 1980. Her most recent prize was A MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, awarded in 1987 at the age of 68.

For additional information contact Kevin Ray, (314) 889-5413.

Thanksgiving



CREDIT COURSE ANNOUNCEMENT

EXTENSION TEACHING

The School of Library and Informational Science, University of Missouri-Columbia, in cooperation with the area extension centers, proposes to offer the following credit courses in the St. Louis area during the Winter 1991 semester.

COURSE: LIBRARY SCIENCE 332: Bibliography & Reference (3)
National, trade, and subject bibliography; general reference tools (encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, etc.); selected information sources in major subject areas; principles, developments and trends in reference services.

INSTRUCTOR: Leslie Edmonds, Adjunct Instructor

CLASS: Class will meet on Thursday nights, beginning January 17 and ending April 25, 1991 from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. at the Maryville College Library, Brown Room, 13550 Conway Road, St. Louis. (No class meeting on March 22, 1991)

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COURSE: LIBRARY SCIENCE 444: The Public Library (3)
Objectives, relations with other institutions, scope of library services, public relations, standards.

INSTRUCTOR: Douglas Raber, MU, School of Library & Informational Science

CLASS: Class will meet on Monday nights, beginning January 14 and ending April 29, 1991 from 6:30-9:30 p.m. at the St. Louis County Library, East Room, 1604 S. Lindbergh, St. Louis. Parking available on the north side of the building. (No class meeting on March 25, 1991)

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COURSE: LIBRARY SCIENCE 312: Principles of Cataloging and Classification (3)
Descriptive cataloging of library materials using Anglo-American Rules (AACR2) and OCLC. Subject cataloging according to Dewey Decimal Classification and subject headings. Theory of classification and bibliographical organization.

INSTRUCTOR: Kathy Nystrom, Adjunct Instructor

CLASS: Class will meet on Wednesday nights, beginning January 16 and ending April 24, 1991 from 6:30 - 9:30 p.m. at the Maryville College Library, Brown Room, 13550 Conway Road, St. Louis.

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COURSE: LIBRARY SCIENCE 326: Developing Library Collections (2)
Selection and acquisition of library materials including sources of print and nonprint materials, collection development policies, community needs analysis, acquisition practices, evaluation techniques and special issues such as censorship, racism and sexism.

INSTRUCTOR: Genie McKee, Adjunct Instructor

CLASS: Class will meet on Tuesday nights, beginning January 15 and ending April 2, 1991 from 6:30-9:30 p.m. at the Maryville College Library, Brown Room, 13550 Conway Road, St. Louis. (No class meeting on March 5, 1991)

For additional information and enrollment applications, please write or call: Barbara Weaver, Extension Teaching, 103 Whitten Hall, MU, Columbia, MO 65211. Phone: 1-800-545-2604.

INFO-PASS UPDATE

Add:

DeSmet High Library
CP: Frances Lindsey, 567-3500
S: 7:30 - 3:30 M-F
OP: No
R: 2 bks, no AV, 2 weeks

Revision:

Univeristy of Mo-St. Louis
Ward E. Barnes Education Library
R: 5 bks; 3 wk. loan; no AV,
reference, periodicals,
microforms, curriculum materials

FREE COPIES

Add:

DeSmet High Library

NETnews is published nine ten times a year by the St. Louis Regional Library Network to report on Network activities, meetings, and items of interest to the membership and wider library community.

News, reviews and comments are welcome. Send information to Bernyce Christiansen, 9425 Big Bend Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63119. You may call Bernyce at the SLRLN office, (314) 965-1305.

A copy of NETnews is sent to each member. Nonmember subscriptions are \$30/year.

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