

library is not in a position to acquire many volumes that are essential in any library worthy of the name.

These remarks with regard to a branch system have, so far, been of a general nature, but it is only necessary to spend a quarter of an hour in almost any suburban library in Christchurch for them to become hard and undeniable facts. It is unfortunately true that many of these libraries do not even possess a good dictionary or an up-to-date set of encyclopedias. No one but a pedant would expect to see there the Encyclopedia Britannica or the Complete Oxford Dictionary. But likewise, no one would expect to find nothing at all. Many of the libraries speak with pride of their non-fiction sections and, should you ask, will hasten to assure you that "they are not one of those libraries which has nothing but westerns, thrillers and love-yarns." However, a further glance round the shelves shows that reference sections are almost non-existent while the non-fiction sections usually consist of only the lightest types of biography and travel.

Before proceeding to analyse a reason for this weakness, it would be unfair, in justice to those concerned, to overlook the attempted reform suggested in 1928. The impetus came from a letter, from Mr. G. Manning (Secretary of the Workers' Educational Association) to the chairman of the District Council, suggesting that the suburban public libraries should be of greater assistance to adult education, and advocating a conference of library delegates to consider the matter. (77)

As the true purpose of a public library has already been emphasised,

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77. Minutes of the Workers' Educational Association, Canterbury District Council, July 3, 1928.