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1895: STUDY CLUBS**

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University of the State of New York

*Division of Educational Extension*

# (Extension) Bulletin

No. II November 1895

## STUDY CLUBS

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# Extension Bulletin

No. 11 November 1895

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## STUDY CLUBS

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The extension department of the University of the State of New York includes all registered agencies for higher education outside the regular teaching institutions, i. e. schools, academies, colleges. So cordial has been the welcome given to the effort to make education available to all, that the number of agencies for home study organized in the past 10 years marks the decade as an epoch in educational development. Much of the work however is desultory and unorganized. In many places it has entirely or partly failed for lack of systematic local efforts. No standards are set because none have existed and there has been lack of incentives to raise the work to higher grade.

In this line the great work of Chautauqua is too well known to need more than a reference. By outlining courses and requiring reports it has made systematic home study possible and has proved that such work can accomplish definite educational results, a theory by no means generally received a quarter of a century ago. Since this is now an admitted principle in the science of education no explanation is necessary for the statement that the University through its extension department recognizes home study as a distinct phase of its work.

The club division of the extension department includes study clubs, which expect of their members study, reading and usually some writing on the subject, during the interval between meetings; and reading circles, whose members are following the same systematic course of reading with more or less frequent meetings for discussion of the matter read. Many without time or inclination to undertake the work of a study club would be glad to engage in such a course, which may be registered with the same privileges as a study club. As the plan of work is the

same for both sections, it is discussed under the general name of clubs.

**Plan of work.** The work of the division is to encourage the formation or to find out the existence of New York clubs for systematic study, and after registering them, to put at their disposal the various helps provided for them by the University.

The local work is sometimes directed by a lecturer or specialist on the subject studied but each club is entirely free to follow its own bent without leadership from outside. Most clubs however prefer if possible to have at least a few lectures on their subject by some one specially qualified. The relation of the department to the local organization is purely advisory and administrative, binding together the work of similar organizations throughout the state. In this way the experiments and conclusions of all may be focalized, and the best methods made available with a minimum expenditure of labor. By making known experiences shown in the reports, the energy now dissipated in working on problems already solved by other clubs may be utilized in more satisfactory ways. From time to time the department will issue bulletins giving statistics of work done by similar organizations at home and abroad, tabulated for comparison, together with details of progress and suggestions for more efficient work in the various lines of study pursued. Added to the recognized advantages of organized effort are the more definite privileges of registration, including loans of books, maps, pictures and apparatus, traveling libraries, exchanges, examinations, credentials and similar rights of regents centers.

Certificates of registration are issued under the University seal, clubs are recorded and numbered in order of establishment, a letter following the number indicating the extent of work undertaken. Clubs maintaining one course a year are marked E; two courses D; three or four courses C; five to nine courses B; and the largest and most active clubs maintaining 10 or more courses annually are marked A. Every club which on inspection is found to maintain at least the minimum standard required will receive a certificate stating that it is officially registered as study club no. . . This stamps the work as of



superior grade, prompting the best to maintain their standing and inducing weaker organizations to raise their work at least to the minimum required for registration.

**Requirements for registration.** Not less than 10 weeks' work on the same general subject entitles to registration on the University lists. The provision of continued study on one subject prevents the waste of thought and energy common in clubs which take up a topic one week only to drive it out of mind the next by one totally different. 10 weeks of such desultory work are full of suggestions and impressions but so confused as to discourage the student from proceeding further. Worse than this, he has lost the thought development and mental culture which follow persistent investigation of a subject in its varied phases and beyond its surface ideas. This rare quality which every one feels is infinitely more to be desired than the mere acquisition of facts has no place in a plan which provides only for superficial study of constantly varying subjects.

The justification for selecting different topics for each week's study is that it gives entertaining variety and provides a subject for each meeting in which some members of the club are specially interested. Lord Playfair gives an amusing example of this effort to please all in a single course by quoting the program of the Mechanics' institute for 1845. It was as follows: "Wit and humor, with comic songs; Women, treated in a novel manner; Legerdemain and spirit rapping; The devil (with illustrations); The heavenly bodies in the stellar system; Palestine and the Holy Land; Speeches by eminent friends of education, interspersed with music, to be followed by a ball. Price for the whole 2s. 6d. Refreshments in the anteroom." The absurdity of this marvelous collection appeals to all, but it is only in a lesser degree that all variety programs lack true educational value. Yet this is the point hardest to impress on local managers who with the best of motives neutralize much of the educational value of their work by catering to the demand which results in the "variety hall" entertainments so much deplored by intelligent friends of music and the drama.

This criticism would not necessarily apply to those clubs whose subject is "Current topics," for this ought not to mean study of

isolated subjects having no connection with each other. The study of recent movements and events is synthetic, bringing out causes and effects and the interrelation of the incidents of modern progress.

Besides the approved course of study, the only requirements for registration are that each club must have at least five members and must annually report its work on blanks supplied by the department. There are no registration fees. Clubs are advised to elect their officers and decide on the course of study in the spring so that the report may include the names of officers for the following year and the application for the traveling library, thus avoiding delay when the club is ready to begin work.

**Guides for study.** While holding the policy of non-interference, the department is always glad to give any practicable help in planning the program or in suggesting methods of study. While we do not offer to lay out entire courses of study for clubs, assistance over difficult points will be given and syllabuses will be lent from the duplicate collection to give further suggestions or to serve as the program for the club. Where the club does not wish to assume the responsibility of planning the work, extension syllabuses may be bought at cost of paper and press work, i. e. two cents for each eight pages. These syllabuses are used by lecturers at extension centers and contain for each of the 10 lectures an analysis of the lecture, references to books and periodicals, and topics for papers. These full notes in the hands of each member of the club have been found very satisfactory aids to thorough study. Sample copies for selection will be sent free to each registered club unless no syllabus on the subject chosen is available from our files, when the club will if possible be referred to some other central organization which has published a syllabus on the subject.

**Traveling libraries.** Study club libraries are made up from our extension and duplicate collections, of which since the books are constantly changing, we have only a card catalog. The printed finding lists of the traveling libraries for general reading will however be sent to suggest recent desirable books to clubs wishing to prepare their own list; if desired, the library will be made up for the

club by the department. In either case the program of study must be sent in advance, to be used by the book board of the state library in approving the list recommended and so preventing any but the best books and most satisfactory editions from being sent. In a few subjects, traveling libraries of the 25 or 50 best books on the subject are already prepared, and when possible these should be taken, to avoid delay in buying other books.

These libraries will be supplied only for subjects on which at least five members of the club agree to study during not less than 10 weeks. As it does not belong to this plan to supply general reading, every book is expected to be of service to the student of the subject either for information, inspiration or illustration.

The fee for a library of 100 volumes is \$5; for 75 volumes, \$4; for 50 volumes, \$3; and for 25 volumes, \$2. The University pays transportation on club libraries only when the club agrees to form itself into a public library committee, keeping all the regents rules for public libraries in regard to hours of opening, records, etc., as outlined in the circular on traveling libraries. When circulation or reference is in any way restricted the club pays transportation.

A blank for application for a traveling library, containing also forms for trustees and librarians agreements, is supplied and this should be signed and forwarded with the fee in advance. To avoid delay, the application should be made at least six weeks before the date set for beginning the year's work.

Oak book cases are supplied without extra charge but as some clubs do not need them, they are not sent unless requested.

**Loans.** Apparatus, lantern slides, photographs or other illustrative material needed by clubs is lent as far as it is available, on payment of fees corresponding to those paid for traveling libraries.

Registered clubs may borrow from the state library not exceeding 10 volumes at once for use at a single meeting. The books will be sent by express on the day before the meeting at which they are to be used and must be returned on the day following. No fee is charged, but the club pays transportation.

**Exchanges.** Books, apparatus or other material bought by a club and no longer needed will if practicable be exchanged with another club for an equivalent. Values will be determined with-