

**LEAGUE OF LIBRARY  
COMMISSIONS,  
YEAR-BOOK, 1907**

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League of Library commissions, Year-book, 1907 by Clara F. Baldwin

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**CLARA F. BALDWIN**

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LEAGUE OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONS

YEAR BOOK

1907

COMPILED BY

CLARA F. BALDWIN

SECRETARY MINNESOTA PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSION

PRINTED FOR THE

LEAGUE OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONS

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American Library Association  
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### INTRODUCTION

The first number of the Year-book, issued by the League of Library Commissions in 1906, contained a history of the establishment and growth of state library commission work, and a brief statement of the activities undertaken by each commission.

In the 1907 edition, the aim has been to furnish a convenient reference book regarding the organization and present methods of work of each commission, with a complete directory of commission workers.

Grateful acknowledgment is herewith extended to the officers of the various commissions, who have responded to special inquiries and supplied the latest information regarding their respective commissions.

CLARA F. BALDWIN,  
Compiler.





## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

With the growth of the library extension movement during the last fifteen years, and the recognition of the library as an educational institution, has developed the idea of fostering and encouraging this movement by state aid or supervision in some form. The public school systems of our several states have been brought to their present successful operation through generous state aid and encouragement, and the public library systems are now following in their footsteps. In spite of the fact that statistics show a great increase in the number of books accessible to the people, a careful study of conditions in rural communities shows that many millions of people have no access to libraries. To solve this problem of furnishing free books to the entire population, the aid of the state has naturally been sought. Another problem of library extension is that of the small library with small income and inexperienced service. To encourage a healthful growth in such libraries and promote their efficiency, the need of some center of information is apparent.

Twenty-seven states are now undertaking library extension work, twenty-two through library commissions, and five through a department of the state library. Although the organization and methods of the several states differ materially, the common aim is to inspire communities with a desire for library service, to foster zeal in library work, and to promote the efficiency of libraries already established.

Massachusetts was the pioneer state in this movement, establishing a library commission in 1890 which was authorized to grant \$100 in books to any town upon the establishment of a free public library. The books are selected by the commissioners, and they have individually exerted much personal influence to encourage the establishment of libraries. When the law was enacted there were 105 towns out of 352 without free libraries, and Massachusetts now has the distinction of being the only state in the union which has a public library in every town.

New Hampshire followed the next year, 1891, by enacting a law nearly identical with the Massachusetts law, which gives \$100 to each town founding a free library. The New Hampshire Commission was instrumental in passing a compulsory library law, according to which every town must levy a certain assessment to maintain a library; the minimum amount instead of the maximum is prescribed; if the town has no library, the fund accumulates; and if a town wishes to omit an assessment, it must especially vote to do so. In 1903, 144 libraries had been established by state aid, leaving but 24 towns in the state without a free library. The Board of Library Commissioners was then abolished, and the work turned over to the trustees of the State Library, who have assumed all the duties and powers of the former commission.

In 1892, New York entered the list, developing a system of state supervision of libraries with more complete centralization than has yet been attempted in any other state. The work has been done by the Home Education Division of the University of the State of New York, the director of the State Library being also director of Home Education, so that the two interests have been identified. Under the law, the regents of the University were given power to issue charters and give financial aid to libraries which fulfilled certain conditions. These libraries are supervised and inspected yearly. New York was the first state to establish traveling libraries, the first libraries being sent out in 1893. Other activities of the division include a library school, extension teaching, publication of reports, study club outlines and aids in book-selection. By the unification law of 1904, the Home Education Division was placed under the Department of Education and is now called the Division of Educational Extension.

In Connecticut, a Public Library Committee appointed by the State Board of Education was created in 1893. This Committee has advisory powers, and is authorized to give direct financial aid to libraries. In 1903 an appropriation was made for traveling libraries and a library visitor has been appointed.

In 1894 Vermont passed a law similar to that of Massachusetts, and in 1900 added the feature of traveling libraries, and appointed a secretary to make personal visits to libraries.

It will be noticed that in the beginning all the New England states, except New York, followed Massachusetts as a model and confined their work to giving direct financial aid to libraries, the features of traveling libraries and library visiting being added later.

The Wisconsin Commission was organized in 1895, and became the pioneer and model for work in the West, under the leadership of Frank A. Hutchins, whose untiring efforts not only stimulated the library extension movement in Wisconsin but promoted many other commission movements. Beginning with a nominal appropriation of \$500, the Commission now has \$23,500 a year, and its work is carried on through three departments, (1) traveling libraries, (2) department of instruction, which includes the work of organizing and visiting libraries, the summer school, institutes, and the permanent library school opened in 1906, and (3) the legislative reference and document department. Field work and instruction by personal visits has been emphasized from the start, and a large proportion of the appropriation has been expended for salaries and administration.

In Ohio, a Commission was established in 1896, to have charge of the State Library and appoint the state librarian. Traveling libraries are operated as a department of the State Library, in this respect following the example of New York. In 1906 an amendment to the law authorized the appointment of a library organizer, but no appropriation has yet been made for this purpose.

The Georgia Commission, established in 1897, is advisory only and has had no appropriation.

In 1899, commissions were established in seven states, two more following in 1900, and five others in 1901. Of these states, the group in the Middle West,—Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska—have followed the lines laid down by Wisconsin, each having a system of traveling libraries, and emphasizing field work and instruction. All but Nebraska