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National Library Week

The AAAS joins with many national service, professional, and industrial organizations to support the second National Library Week, 12-18 April 1959. Organized under the joint sponsorship of the National Book Committee, Inc., and the American Library Association, its objectives are to encourage reading by Americans in all walks of life and to promote the use and support of libraries of all kinds—in the home, in communities, in schools, and in colleges.

The value of good library collections and facilities is recognized by all scholars and professional scientists. So far as the general public is concerned, a greatly increased awareness of the role of the school library in education is needed. High-school libraries are a fairly common adjunct of the public educational system, but many of them are not good, and all too often they are in the charge of an over-worked teacher instead of a trained librarian. A still smaller percentage have adequate collections of up-to-date science and mathematics books. A survey of the library holdings of approximately 1000 representative American high schools conducted by the AAAS during 1958 disclosed that only 5.1 percent of the books were devoted to science and mathematics. Considering the portion of the school curriculum devoted to science and mathematics, not less than 20 percent of a high-school library's holdings should be in this area.

The importance of good library facilities is recognized in Title III of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (Public Law 85-864, 85th Congress; 72 Stat. 1590) which makes funds available for "acquisition of . . . printed materials (other than textbooks) for use in providing education in science, mathematics, or modern foreign language, in public elementary or secondary schools, or both, . . ." Standards for the improvement of instruction in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages formulated by the Council of Chief State School Officers emphasize "that the provision of better materials and equipment would result in more efficient learning and better adaptations of the educational programs to individual differences, both for the academically gifted and for those whose talents lie in other fields."

The AAAS Traveling Science Library Program, supported by an annual grant from the National Science Foundation, is immediately concerned with the improvement of school libraries and the enlargement of their role in science education. The Traveling High School Science Library, received currently by 1309 senior high and private preparatory schools, is enriching science and mathematics courses and accelerated and honors programs for gifted students.

Plans are now being developed to initiate a Traveling Elementary Science Library Program in the fall of 1959 which will be made available to 1000 selected elementary and preparatory schools, particularly those that are giving special consideration to the gifted student. Science Service, in administering the Westinghouse Science Talent Search and the National Science Fairs, has determined that the majority of the winners developed their science interests before they entered junior high school.

The celebration of National Library Week is indeed appropriate, but achievement of lasting results in education will come about when every week is National Library Week.—HILARY DEASON, AAAS