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SAVANNAH STATE COLLEGE LIBRARY

STATE COLLEGE BRANCH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Status of Card Catalog Use at Savannah State College Library	5
Madeline G. Harrison	
Some Accounting Problems Involved in Matching Costs and Revenues	10
William H. M. Bowens	
The Life and Creative Activities of James Allen Bland (1854-1911)	15
Coleridge Alexander Braithwaite	
Two Poems: Song of Woman Eternal Christ of All Compassion: A Litany	19
Luetta Colvin Upshur	
A Teacher Education Point of View	21
Velma V. Watters	
Ecological and Economical Aspects of Spanish Moss	28
Margaret C. Robinson	
A Survey of Negro Preschool Centers in Savannah	33
Zelia E. Owens	
The Savannah State College Library: In Retrospect and Prospect	40
E. J. Josey	
Sherman, Savannah, and the Negro	52
Blanton E. Black	

The Savannah State College Library: In Retrospect and Prospect

by

E. J. Josey

The founding of any library is usually the result of the thoughts and actions of a few people in a community. But before these library-minded citizens can act, there must be an environment which nurtures or encourages the growth of a library. In our institutions of learning, the need for books and related materials to support the instructional program is the one single factor which nurtures the birth of the academic library. Such institutions of higher learning as Harvard University and the University of California can boast that their libraries preceded the growth and development of their institutions.

Most American university and college libraries are not as fortunate as Harvard or California. There is overwhelming evidence that, in most instances, the library has lagged behind her sister departments in the college. One scholar asserts, "In many institutions it is very low on the totem pole—below the student union, athletic field, gymnasium, and other accepted facilities. Colleges and universities will invest great sums in expensive scientific and technological development, all of which may be necessary, but will not meet satisfactorily the needs of that branch of the institution which is extremely close to its reason for existence, and which is perhaps the best single means of guaranteeing the continuity between classroom and post collegiate culture."¹

Returning to the assertion that the need for books and related materials to support the instructional program which nurtures the development of an academic library, we find that other factors and influences, in too many instances, have operated against or restrained and retarded the development of many of the nation's college libraries in general, and Negro college libraries in particular. If Carlyle's dictum "The true university of these days is a collection of books" is taken seriously, America's universities and colleges are rather poor. In spite of the plight of many American academic libraries, in the building of institutions of higher learning, libraries have played a significant role.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The opening of the new college library concurrently with the commencing of the 1959-60 academic year marked a

¹William W. Brickman. "The Library and Higher Education," *School and Society*, 87:348, September 12, 1959.

new phase in the history of Savannah State College. For the first time in the history of this venerable institution, library service is available to students and faculty in a library building erected exclusively for library purposes. Such a historic occasion merits a little reflection and crystal-gazing. The specific purposes of this paper are twofold: Firstly, to take a historical glance at the Savannah State College Library, and secondly, to do a little crystal-gazing by attempting to chart a new course for the development of the Savannah State College Library in the light of new standards of college library service and the development of new programs for library service.

Limitations and Strengths

There are many weaknesses inherent in a study of this kind. In retrospect, one has hindsight and the lessons of the past which enable him to generalize and reach a plausible conclusion if sources of information are available. In prospect, one is charting a new course for the ship with foresight that may not be as safe as hindsight in view of unforeseen developments and circumstances which may cause him to alter his course. Specific limitations also include conflicting reports in the college catalog with respect to book stock figures and figures on inventory records. The lack of library reports from 1891 to 1942, the gaps in the college catalog collection, the absence of the accession record up to 1941, and the paucity of information in general on the library during the early years of the institution are a few of the impediments for producing an exhaustive historical study on the library.

The strengths of the study stem from the fact that three former librarians, Miss Joan McAllister (now Dr. Joan Gordon of the faculty), Miss Ursuline Belcher (now Mrs. Ben Ingersoll) and Miss Luella Hawkins (presently Associate and Reference Librarian) were gracious enough to submit to the writer's probing in order to ferret out bits of unrecorded history. The preparation for the future would not have been possible if the new college standards were not available.² The serious consideration of the challenge of the sixties and the effect of the challenge on educational institutions, generally, and academic libraries, specifically, by a vanguard of educators and librarians have aided the writer in his attempt to shape a course for the future.

THE LIBRARY'S HISTORICAL PAST

It is virtually impossible to consider the history of an academic library without some consideration of the history of the institution of which it is an integral part.

The Savannah State College is the oldest Negro, state-supported higher educational institution in Georgia. The

²Association of College and Research Libraries. "Standards for College Libraries," *College and Research Libraries*, 20:274-280, July 1959.

first step for its founding was taken by the legislature in 1890, when it accepted the provisions of the second Morrill Act of 1890.³ It was not until November 26, 1890, however, that the Legislature enacted legislation establishing the Georgia State Industrial College as a branch of the University of Georgia. The newly appointed board, under the leadership of P. W. Meldrim of Savannah invited towns to bid for the college. After giving consideration to other sites, the board accepted the old Warren Estate near Thunderbolt, six miles from Savannah. On October 7, 1891, approximately 1200 persons assembled on the campus to witness the formal opening of the college.⁴

Range reveals that "the Morrill Act had provided specifically that emphasis must be placed on industries, on the teaching of Agriculture, the Mechanic Arts, the Physical, Natural and Economic Sciences, Mathematics, and English—all with reference to their practical application to everyday life."⁵ For many years, the college curriculum emphasized the courses of study listed above. However, in the fall of 1951, Agriculture was discontinued. In subsequent years the curricular offerings have expanded to run the gamut from business to music, therefore, going beyond the original aims and purposes of the institution.

There was not much in the early history of the college to foretell or reveal in a prophetic view the rich fulfillment which was to come in later years. In addition to the college offerings, Georgia State Industrial College had to provide college preparatory studies, because there were only one or two high schools for Negroes in the state. Nevertheless, the groundwork was laid for its contribution to Negro higher education. The name of the college was changed to Savannah State College on January 18, 1950. Despite the exciting development of the college to its present position of the largest Negro undergraduate college in Georgia, the historical development of the library was not impressive because emphasis, at the outset, was on the practical; therefore, there was little need for books. Certainly, emphasis on college preparatory studies and the lack of emphasis on the library as a teaching instrument impeded the progress of the Savannah State College Library.

Beginnings of the Library Collection

Turning from the history of the college to the history of the library, it is quite evident that while the college was expanding and growing rapidly in many directions, it was unfortunately neglecting the development of library resources. This is quite evident from the present status of the library collection and the history of its growth and develop-

³Willard Range, *The Rise and Progress of Negro Colleges In Georgia 1865-1949* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1951), p. 62.

⁴*Ibid.* p. 63.

⁵*Ibid.* p. 64.

ment. The first college catalogue reveals that there was a library collection of 250 volumes.⁶ Twenty years later, the official catalogue of the college reveals that only 350 additional volumes had been added; thus, giving a total collection of 600 volumes.⁷

The slow growth of the book collection gives evidence which supports the belief that the library played a minor role in the early history of the institution. However, the statement, "We are anxious to increase this number as rapidly as possible, and therefore solicit donations of good books from our friends"⁸ is a profound testimony which demonstrates that the college authorities were cognizant of the importance of the library but were unable to build a first-rate library collection because of lack of funds. Six years later, the college catalogue reports that the collection had decreased to 400 volumes.⁹ Since there are no inventory records available, it is impossible to reach a conclusion regarding the decrease; in all probability, the volumes were discarded because they were obsolete or lost during the intervening years.

Thirty years after the establishment of the institution, a library collection of 400 volumes is substantial proof of the little use of books in the instructional program. Hulbert suggests that "books were instruments of formal instruction and study; the pleasure and recreation elements in reading had no place in the strict academic discipline then maintained"¹⁰ in the early development of Negro collegiate education. Closely allied with Hulbert's explanation is the fact that there was no real need for a large variety of books necessary for a college library as there is in the 1960's, because so many Negro college students were unable to read anything except the basic elementary textbooks. Therefore, the majority of Negro college library collections, at the turn of the century, were woefully inadequate.

Continuing the historical survey of the book collection, it is impossible to trace the growth of the collection in the 1920's as reflected in the college catalog, for the college catalog does not mention the number of volumes in the library collection. Nevertheless, the United States Office of Education's survey of Negro institutions in 1928 reveals that very few additions had been made to the library collection in the 20's. Klein writes, "The library of the Georgia State Industrial College has only a few books, the majority of which are old and out of date. Because no card catalogue

⁶*Announcement and Catalogue of the Georgia State Industrial College, Savannah, Georgia, 1891-92*, p. 26.

⁷*Yearbook of the Georgia State Industrial College, Savannah, Georgia, 1909-1910*, p. 41.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Catalog of the Georgia State Industrial College, Savannah, Georgia, 1920-21*, p. 9.

¹⁰James A. Hulbert, "The Negro College Library," *Journal of Negro Education* 12:623, 1943.

has been made, the institution was unable to furnish information regarding the number of volumes on hand.

"The committee found, however, that a large, well-lighted room had been provided with reading tables and chairs and that the shelves and other equipment were of first-rate type. Expenditures for library purposes in 1926-27 amounted to \$400, of which \$300 was expended for books and \$100 for magazines.

"Plans for the expansion of the library have recently been made; some science books of a collegiate quality have already been added . . ."¹¹

The Klein report not only reveals the deficiencies of the Georgia State Industrial College Library, but also points out the inadequacies of Negro college libraries in general, for it revealed that only fifteen Negro colleges of the seventy-nine surveyed had 10,000 or more volumes and seven had no libraries at all.¹² The foregoing statement is not given as an apology for the snail-pace growth of the Savannah State College Library, but given to portray the weakness of library service in Negro institutions during this period. The following commentary by Holmes, "While the report generously praises the Negro Colleges for their great advancement under serious handicaps, yet it reveals, in general, a serious deficiency in support, in library facilities . . ."¹³ supports this writer's premise in a foregoing section of this paper that in most colleges, the library has lagged behind the other departments within the framework of growth and development of the entire institution. The integration of the library and the instructional program has only been emphasized during the last thirty years; this emphasis has resulted in the improvement and upgrading of academic libraries in our nation's colleges.

The period 1931 to 1940-41 is significant. The library has grown to approximately 6,000 volumes during the school year 1931-32.¹⁴ By 1940-41, a collection of 8,000 volumes was housed in the college library.¹⁵

The college library's accession record dates from 1941. The greatest growth in the library collection has come during the last two decades. The accession record reveals that as of June 30, 1942, which marked the end of the first year in which the accession record was maintained, the library

¹¹Arthur J. Klein. *Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities*, United States Office of Education, Department of the Interior, Bulletin, 1928, No. 7 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1929), p. 329.

¹²*Ibid.* p. 624.

¹³Dwight Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Evolution of the Negro College* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1934), p. 184.

¹⁴*Catalogue of the Georgia State Industrial College*, Savannah, Georgia, 1931-32, p. 13.

¹⁵*Catalogue of the Georgia State Industrial College*, Savannah, Georgia, 1940-41, p. 15.

added 1,753 volumes. By June 30, 1960, the library had officially accessioned 37,375 volumes which represent a 467 per cent increase over the holdings of the library in 1940-41. This total does not represent a true picture of the library's holdings, for many volumes have been worn out, superseded, discarded and withdrawn, so as of June 30, 1960, the total holdings of the library collection was 28,750. The tremendous growth of the book collection during the last two decades gives first hand evidence of the increasing importance of the role of the library in the institution.

The Library Staff

Although the library was established in 1891, and 600 books were added by the school year 1900-1901, the first time a librarian is mentioned in available records is in the catalog for 1930-31. Miss Ursuline Belcher's (now Mrs. Ben Ingersoll) name appeared in the catalog as the librarian. However, Miss Joan McAllister (now Dr. Joan Gordon, of the Social Science faculty) served part-time for two years prior to Mrs. Ingersoll's appointment. Mrs. Ingersoll also divided her time between the operation of the library and the teaching of English classes, but spent considerably more time in the library.

Before the establishment of the Hampton Library School, there was no satisfactory agency in the South which had the responsibility of setting standards for admission to the profession of librarianship. Therefore, as a result of this sorry state of affairs, there was a wide range in formal educational achievements among Negro college librarians than in any of the older professions. Dr. Gordon assumed the position with no training in Library Science, while Mrs. Ingersoll had a few courses at the University of Minnesota. In spite of their lack of training, Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Ingersoll performed admirably, for much of the equipment ordered by Dr. Gordon remained in use until the opening of the new library building in 1959, and many of the titles catalogued by Mrs. Ingersoll are still a part of our collection today.

One of the most cogent statements which show the importance of trained librarians for Negro educational institutions is "probably the greatest impetus to general library development and, doubtless, the most important single factor in the improvement of libraries within Negro institutions of higher learning, was the work of the Hampton Institute Library School. The activities of its director, Miss Florence R. Curtis, were greatly responsible for the arousing of Negro educators from their indifference regarding libraries. The fourteen years of the school's existence show a remarkable record."¹⁶

The Savannah State College library owes a great debt

¹⁶Hulbert, *op. cit.*, p. 624.

to the Hampton Institute Library School, for the first professionally trained librarian employed by the college was a graduate of this school. Miss Luella Hawkins assumed the position of Librarian in the fall of 1934 and remained at the helm until she became Associate and Reference Librarian in the fall of 1959. In the fall of 1946, Miss Madeline Harrison joined the staff as Assistant Librarian; and in 1948, Miss Althea Williams augmented the professional staff. The assumption of the position of Librarian by the writer in 1959 increased the professional staff to four. It can be said with great authority that it is with Luella Hawkins' librarianship, forty-four years after the founding of the college, that a new beginning for the establishment of a real college library seems modestly to have been made. All would agree that an excellent book collection is the *sine qua non* of a college library; nevertheless, unless there is a highly qualified professional staff of librarians to organize the book collection and to assist readers in the use of the book collection, adequate library service is an impossibility.

Library Quarters

Efficient library service is not possible without adequate library quarters. All available information indicates that the first organized and catalogued library was housed in Meldrim. A picture of the modest and well appointed library appears in the 1930-31 college catalog. The 1936-37 catalog announces the opening of the library in new quarters located on the first floor of the Walter B. Hill Hall and the library remained in this location until the summer of 1959.

It is universally true that library quarters are overtaxed when either its readers space or its book capacity is more than 75 per cent in use. For many years the Hill-Hall quarters were inadequate, for students would spread out their work and lay coats or books on adjacent chairs; consequently, students were unanimous in their dissatisfaction with the library as a place to study. During the middle of each quarter when the highest attendance was counted, the library was always overcrowded and congested. By and large, the library was not at all inviting.

The physical aspects of the library were far from being ideal. Working space for staff was at a premium. There were congested areas behind the Circulation and Reserve Desks and a small area for technical processing. The total inadequacy of the library seriously hampered efficiency of service to readers and technical operations.

For years, the college administration, the library staff, the faculty and the student body yearned for and dreamed about a new library building. This dream became a reality when students and faculty entered the new library on October 7, 1959 for library service. There is no need to describe

the new building here, because a description appears elsewhere in print.¹⁷ Designed to be the focal point of the entire educational experience at Savannah State College, the new library building is destined to become the intellectual center of the campus.

PROSPECTUS FOR THE FUTURE

A historical portrait of the library has been drawn which depicts the growth of the library in three areas: book collection, professional staff, and quarters. This section of the paper represents a blueprint for the future. To chart a course for the future is one of the most difficult tasks facing man in any field of endeavor, for the rapid changes are so fast until the architect of the future must, in some cases, alter his plans before he removes the blueprint from the drawing board. However, academic librarians would agree that college administrators and librarians must look into the future with sound plans for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is virtually impossible for a college to provide a good general education for its students unless it has a good library. Secondly, library services and facilities are of such importance until the absence of first-rate facilities and services along with a superb book collection seriously handicap students and faculty. And thirdly, costs in relation to services are high, e.g., a growing student enrollment demands a rapidly growing collection and services; acquisition and cataloguing become more expensive as these operations become more complicated. The three factors listed above represent only general factors that plague library planners for the future. More specific factors will be dealt with as these become germane to the discussion.

A Book Collection For the Future

Most college librarians contend that a well chosen collection of 100,000 volumes will provide for the reading program of an undergraduate institution. Our present collection of 28,750 is woefully inadequate. According to the new standards, an institution of our size should have a minimum collection of 70,000 volumes.¹⁸ The need for library materials is determined in part by the extent and variety of course offerings as well as the extra-curricular reading interests of the students. "Also it should contain a generous selection of works to keep the members of the faculty abreast of the latest advances in scholarship."¹⁹

Although the library has a responsibility to faculty needs and interests, the collection should be a live working collection and not primarily a research collection. Esoteric and little used material should not be part and parcel of an

¹⁷E. J. Josey, "Savannah State," *Library Journal*, 84:3721-3722, December 1, 1959.

¹⁸Association of College and Research Libraries. *Op. cit.*, 278.

¹⁹*Ibid.* 276.

undergraduate collection; these materials may be borrowed from one of the university or research libraries on inter-library loan. To ensure the assembling of a useful collection for the support of the instructional program, it is necessary for the faculty to participate in the book selection process.

What are the essentials of a good library collection? It is essential that the library amass a good reference collection which will provide bibliographical keys to the world of scholarship. Secondly, current books should be reflected in the library's holdings. These current titles should not necessarily be those appearing on the best-seller list, but books that will become a part of our heritage, e.g., Vance Packard's **The Status Seekers**, Joseph Wood Krutch's **Human Nature and the Human Condition** or C. Wright Mills' **The Power Elite**. Thirdly, "in addition to the materials related directly or indirectly to the curriculum, the collection should contain the standard works which represent the heritage of civilization. These works should be continuously supplemented by a wide variety of books which combine timeliness with enduring values chosen to arouse the intellectual curiosity of students and to satisfy their recreational reading needs."²⁰ And fourthly, the collection must contain a periodical collection which will supplement the book collection on subjects which the library does not have, as well as provide the most recent information available. In the years ahead, the periodical collection must be augmented by at least 200 titles.

To provide for the kind of collection suggested above, it is imperative that the library should have a continuing budget for books and related materials of not less than \$30,000 for the next ten years. This budget would aid in filling in the gaps of the collection of older landmark books which should have been procured during the library's lean years, as well as provide for the generous acquisition of significant current books. The sum \$30,000 per year may sound exorbitant; however, one college librarian suggests "the college should be prepared to spend enough money for library services. As a rule of thumb, an average expenditure of \$100.00 per student per year is desirable; anything less than \$50.00 per student, per year is inadequate."²¹

Library Staff

No library is better than the professional staff which provides its services to readers. The addition of the Serials and Curriculum Materials Librarian in the fall of 1960 will increase the professional staff to five. The new positions that will be needed for the future will be largely determined by an increasing enrollment, an increase in book funds, and

²⁰*Ibid.* 276-277.

²¹Wen Chao Chen, "A Sound Library Service for the Small College," *Liberal Education*, 46:239, May 1960.

the addition of new library services. In the immediate future, it is our desire to add an assistant cataloguer to handle special materials, e.g., records, curriculum materials center items, and foreign monographs, etc. The provision for an Assistant Cataloger, along with competent clerical assistance will provide the library with adequate personnel for the decade ahead. A highly trained professional staff is essential to the efficient operation of a college library.

Library Use

The use of the library by college students is the direct result of faculty teaching methods. The assembling of the best book collection and the procurement of the most able librarians in the world will not alter this fact. A faculty that employs the use of the textbook does not demand the use of the library. The Savannah State faculty is greatly concerned about the use of the college library.

During the year 1959-60, the dean of faculty stressed the use of the library at one of the Curriculum Committee Meetings and at a special faculty-instructional meeting. The electrifying discussion which followed generated more library assignments than ever before. Another healthy sign during the 1959-60 school year was this fact: there was a 71.48 per cent decrease in the use of reserve books, for our students now have access to the entire book collection because of open stacks in the new building.

In the years ahead, our students will depend less and less upon reserve books. They will do more independent study as recommended by Mr. Guy Lyle, Librarian of Emory University who opened the 1959-60 Savannah State Faculty Workshop with a brilliant address on "The Use of The College Library." Two scholars hold this view: One of America's most library-minded college presidents writes, "I discovered at the early stage of my career that the reserve shelf, instead of facilitating use of books, was often, in actual practice, a barrier to their effective employment. Many students never touched any other books; the catalogue, the reference works, bibliographical aids of every kind were all neglected."²² Knapp writes, "Perhaps the heyday of the reserve collection is over. . . . Perhaps college instructors, in general, are returning to textbooks, source-books and books of readings, and are also taking advantage of the newly-available paper-bound reprints."²³ The trend away from the assignment of specific readings to a sampling of a wider range of materials will certainly give our students more knowledge of and appreciation for books, which in turn, will be a variation from being spoon-fed to learning.

²²Henry M. Wriston, *Academic Procession; Reflections of a College President* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 133.

²³Patricia B. Knapp, *College Teaching and The College Library* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1959), p. 19.

With regard to the role of the library staff in stimulating library use, the professional library staff has a sacred duty insofar as encouraging greater use of the library. The staff should keep the faculty abreast of the new materials in their teaching fields. In addition to the faculty's responsibility to encourage more student reading, the library staff must promote cultural and recreational reading by providing and making accessible stimulating materials and providing displays, book lists, publicity, lecture series, and stimulating a readers advisor service.

The prospectus for the future is great. Our problems are complex but not insolvable. Assembling a book collection for the future, maintaining a highly skilled staff and stimulating library use are by no means all the problems we face. A myriad of additional vexed questions, e.g., efficient utilization of space, a more extensive use of microtext materials with the accompanying problems of procurement of machines for our readers' use, the use of time and motion studies for the effective use of staff personnel and the inauguration of plans for bibliographical training for upper level students, are being studied but could not be taken into consideration in a paper of this length.

SUMMARY

A thumb nail sketch of the development of the college and a history of the library have been discussed as essential to an understanding of the complex library situation of the past and the presentation of a program for the future. The whole history reveals that during the early years of the college there was a terrifying complacency about the library. This complacency and neglect stemmed from a lack of funds available, the absence of trained personnel, unsuitable library quarters and to a large extent, the emphasis of the curriculum on the practical. As the college began to grow curriculum-wise, there was not a corresponding growth in library resources. In its comparative neglect of the library during the early years, Savannah State College has followed a pattern which was prevalent in all Negro institutions of higher learning.

As we project into the future, our number one task will be to strengthen the library collection. Strengthening the book collection demands a large capital outlay of funds during the next decade in order to catch up in the assembling of a basic book collection, filling in the gaps of the collection, and at the same time, acquiring significant current titles. As the library collection grows, as library services increase, along with an increased college enrollment, correspondingly, the staff must be augmented. During the next decade, there will be less use of reserves and more use of a wider variety of materials from the stacks. The library staff must be unrelenting in its encouragement of the love for and appreciation of books by our students.

All in all, the Savannah State College Library must foster and nurture scholarship. Its proper future should be to become the richest, the most varied, and the most accessible college library in Georgia. As the library grows to achievement, the library will be measured by its service and its usefulness to the institution. Sympathetic support it will always need. It must never slip into inconspicuousness and mediocrity. So long as the library fosters and nurtures scholarship, it will be the intellectual center of the campus.