

A FEW REASONS WHY AN ECOLOGY READING TABLE, OR CORNER, WOULD BE  
AN IMPORTANT PUBLIC SERVICE TO MEMPHIS AT THIS TIME:

I. CONVENIENCE. More people can read more articles and pertinent chapters in books when they do not have to spend time searching for books and magazines. Librarians' time also might be saved. Also, since many of us are lazy or just pressed for time, some persons might become "ecologically aware" who might not otherwise be reached.

II. AN IMPORTANT OBJECT LESSON IN THE INTERRELATEDNESS OF VARIOUS FIELDS AND STUDIES. The psychological value of seeing lumped together under "Ecology" such superficially disparate topics as those listed below may prove one of the most important services of such a reading center:

For example, along with a copy of THE CHEMICAL FEAST, there might well be (1) books about insects, showing that most insects are

- (1) either harmless, useful, or indispensable;
- (2) books about birds, and perhaps also frogs and turtles; these are among our important natural insect controls;
- (3) books on bread baking at home; more and more women are turning away from the over-refined flours and over-preserved quality of store-bought baked goods. They are learning now to be wary of possible chemical build-up whose end results in terms of disease are not yet fully understood. (The cyclamate and MSG "scare" started a lot of people to thinking about such questions. The recent Nader investigation of the FDA's laxity has not laid their fears to rest.)

What is the common link connecting these diverse topics?

The need for non-poisonous insect control to protect our food supply from toxic contaminants, as well as the need for a consumer-oriented FDA to reduce contaminants inherent in present food-processing methods. (Enlightened consumer demand is the quickest way to get the needed changes!)

III. A CLEARING-HOUSE AND REFERENCE SOURCE. The solution of many of our current (and worsening) or predictable problems should become the concern of every taxpayer; we are footing the bills for ignorance--whether it be our own or that of our governmental authorities. Memphis is far behind many cities in solving--or even identifying--certain problems closely related to pollution:

For accounts of what some other cities have done about specific problems, here are a few references:

1. Rockford, Illinois put its garbage to good use as land fill. (ORGANIC GARDENING AND FARMING, November 1970, page 103).
2. Chicago showed its officials that "it's cheaper to move sludge /from its sewage plant/ to farms than to burn it." (OG&F, Dec. '70, p.43.)
3. San Francisco's Examiner & Chronicle sponsored an experiment in recycling paper, running a banner headline "Save Your Papers--and Save Trees." (OG&Fm, July 1970, p. 45.)

IV. THE SUBTLE BUT VERY IMPORTANT MATTER OF STATUS ATTRIBUTED TO ANY PROBLEM OR AREA WHICH THE PUBLIC LIBRARY--especially our PUBLIC LIBRARY!--sees fit to deal with. After some months of wondering why ecology had been so singularly slighted--in displays, new holdings, and general attention--I discovered it was simply a matter of a reduced budget! But how many Memphians bother to find out why the hiatus in this important area of information? Those of us who every day observe the results of misinformation or lack of information in actions by citizens and government alike find Memphis' backwardness in this all-important area--concerned with the very survival of man as a species and life as we know it--are appalled at what has been happening. (In this connection, see the report on the recent AIR QUALITY WORKSHOP.) Worst of all, the disenchantment of the young with the entire democratic system becomes all too understandable when they observe the laxity or downright selfishness of government officials in handling matters which intimately concern the health of citizens. They forget that even the government officials may be ignorant of facts!

A FEW JEFFERSONIAN THOUGHTS IN CLOSING; Democracy can be made to work only when an informed public is prepared to act upon fact and principle.

Is not the education of the adult public one of the most important responsibilities of the Public Library?

Respectfully submitted,

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Memphis, Tennessee