Bayouland Library System Gets Good Rating

Bayouland, a new system which had to start from scratch with organization and staffing and which had been in operation only nine months when the monitoring was done, are proud of our rating and think it shows we are doing a good job,” Mrs. Huson said, “and, of course, we hope to earn a higher rating when Miss Kee monitors us again next year.”

Bayouland is being funded during a two-year pilot period by a grant made under the Library Services and Construction Act through Louisiana State Library, Mrs. Huson explained. Funding for the first year was $260,000, of which $190,012, or more than $5 per capita, went directly to the member libraries. Amount of funding for the year has not yet been determined, pending legislative action on the state budget.

“Bayouland’s basic functions are to provide interlibrary loan and reference service for the clients of our member libraries,” Mrs. Huson explained, “but we are also engaged in a number of projects which fit into the new image of libraries as service organizations rather than mere storerooms of books.

Increase Services

“One of these projects is finding ways to increase library services to the disadvantaged, and we are glad the monitoring team could be here for our May 5 workshop on this phase,” Mrs. Huson commented.

“Among the speakers were 10 women and one men representing area or local agencies which already serve some or all segments of the disadvantaged population of Acadiana, and we want our library services to be based on cooperation with existing agencies, whenever possible, to reach all those who need help in coping with some of the problems faced in day-by-day living.”

After the workshop, the team spent a day interviewing members of the Bayouland staff, and another day on a 170-mile trip through much of the area to visit libraries and to talk with the administrative librarians who are members of the executive council of the system.

The final day was spent in discussing the system, its progress and problems, with the director and with Lucille Arceneaux, librarian of Lafayette Public, which serves as the center for the system.

“The team was very perceptive and analytical,” Mrs. Huson stated. “We had been going full steam ahead with our many activities and had not put on the brakes long enough for assessments and evaluations, so the team’s findings will serve well as guidelines for the future. If every federally-funded activity could be so thoroughly monitored, we taxpayers could have confidence that our tax dollars are being spent well — not wastefully.”

French Language

“Miss Kee, whose work covers six Southwestern states, particularly wanted to monitor Bayouland because of its uniqueness, as it combines public and academic libraries in its membership and because it serves an area where French is a first or second language for much of the population. On our trip, Miss Kee was impressed by the large percentage of French-speaking personnel in the Bayouland libraries,” Mrs. Huson said.

In her written findings, Miss Kee reported that the Bayouland Library System has made “considerable progress toward fulfilling contractual commitments” and that “the project is exceptionally well staffed with qualified and enthusiastic persons, dedicated to the purposes of the program.”

She stated that during the workshop she had observed the “positive interest, attitudes and concerns related to improving public library services to the disadvantaged,” and had found in contacts with librarians during her tour “complete approval and intent to keep the system intact with local funds, if necessary.”

Among her recommendations, she suggested that the system “follow up without delay” its workshop of services to the disadvantaged with specially designed library services to reach those persons who have educational, socio-economic, cultural or other disadvantages, including limited English-speaking ability.