

Section on Commercial Interests

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THE CIRCULATING LIBRARY AS A SIDE LINE FOR DRUGGISTS.*

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Competition has become so great in the drug business that druggists, almost without exception, are on the lookout for profitable side-lines wherewith they can increase their incomes. As can be observed on every side, various forms of side-lines (some appropriate and others inappropriate—in fact some a disgrace to our calling) have been decided upon and given a trial to test their earning value.

In presenting for your consideration the circulating library as a desirable side-line, I am aware of the fact that I am not setting forth an untried source of revenue, for many of you may have one in service in your places of business.

My main object in presenting this paper is that our experience with a circulating library may offer to you a new thought or two which may be helpful in the management of the one you have installed, or may install.

The first decision one must render when approaching this subject is the legitimacy of such a side-line in a drug store. Customs make laws, and competition oftentimes, compels those upon whom rests the obligation of providing the necessities of life for the household to search out added sources of revenue, wherewith to augment their incomes from their drug business. As the drug business is properly classified as a branch of one of the learned professions, anything that is of an educational nature, uplifting mankind and adding to the general store of culture of our citizens, can be classified as a legitimate side-line to a professional-commercial enterprise. If we compare the circulating library with some other side-lines that find their way into the shops, designated by the honored title, Pharmacy or Drug Store, it becomes apparent at the outset, that it is one of the least objectionable auxiliary sources of revenue that a druggist can adopt.

The second question that must be decided is whether it is wisest to provide one's own library, or to serve as the agent of a trustworthy concern that will co-operate honestly and heartily with you. After very careful consideration of this phase of the subject, we came to the conclusion that our interests would be served best by accepting the agency of a reliable, responsible concern that maintains headquarters in our city.

It may appear very strange to you that we chose the agency of a concern over which we had no control in preference to being master of the situation

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absolutely; but we found with the agency we could with diplomacy, more effectively control our customers as to rules, regulations, rates, excuses for inability to immediately supply a desired book, collection of rentals and charges for lost or destroyed books; and stood less liability of giving offense to our patrons, with the resultant loss of trade in other departments, including our legitimate and chief line of work, drug and chemical sales, prescription compounding and dispensing. We installed our circulating library with a determination to give the owners thereof a square deal and demand similar treatment in return. I am very happy to report that our relations with the owners, through their managers, has been uniformly, mutually satisfactory.

When we had demonstrated that we were truly co-operating with the other party to the contract, for mutual pecuniary gain, we received from them the greatest possible degree of satisfactory service to ourselves and to our patrons. Being wide-awake business men they fully realized their opportunity, and endeavored to derive the richest possible harvest from the field that we provided for their commercial venture.

The book case was given a prominent position in the salesroom, so located that young children could not reach the volumes (incidentally I will state that it was demonstrated that it is poor business policy to provide juvenile books for young readers, for several reasons which need not be mentioned here.)

The title of each and every book was recorded when received in a ledger arranged alphabetically, in front of which title the date of its receipt was noted. When it was returned to the messenger, who brought the weekly supply of new books, the date of its removal from our library was inscribed, thus giving us a complete record of its arrival and its removal.

A list was kept of the number of books received, also one of those returned each week, giving us at all times a summary of the number of books we were charged with by the owners thereof, from which we could readily check up the stock on hand, as we kept a detailed record of all volumes leaving our store.

Another record was made of the total earnings of the library; also of our income from the same (we received 25 percent of all moneys collected) whereby we could readily observe the progress being made with it, from a financial standpoint. As we were not held responsible for books that were lost, of which we had a record as to the lessee thereof, the commissions received were net income. We were never asked to pay for any books that we could thus account for, and none others disappeared.

A list of books desired by readers was kept on a loose sheet of paper, the titles of which were sent to headquarters once a week, several days prior to the day when the messenger called for delivery of new books and removal of undesirable ones. As several of the daily papers contain weekly reviews of the new books of fiction, we were able to keep posted as to titles and obtain information regarding them. Catalogues of recently printed fiction, procurable at first class book-stores were also helpful to that end.

Several days prior to the day for exchange of volumes, we sent out courteous notes to those patrons against whom were charged any of the works of fiction, requesting prompt return of the same if they had finished reading them. This

frequently brought forth expressions of thanks together with the books, as they had laid them aside carelessly, and having neglected to return them, the charges thereon were accumulating.

A list of those patrons who had proven themselves unworthy to be entrusted with the custody of a book was kept on hand for ready reference and their requests for books were treated accordingly oftentimes with beneficial results.

As some works of fiction are not of the class of reading matter that one would care to have found in his (or her) possession, it is wisest to prevent their finding a resting place upon the shelves. Care must be exercised that young maidens are protected from the baneful influence of reading matter of a suggestive character.

The high standing of the prescription and drug department should be reflected in the library, for then it will be a credit to your name and an aid to your place of business. I can recall a number of desirable, intelligent, profitable customers we gained through our library; hence it can readily be seen that its benefits extend beyond its own field of usefulness.

Care must be exercised that the books do not become the innocent carriers of malignant disease germs. Where no efficient board of health is provided to safeguard the public health, extraordinary caution must be used to see that no epidemic can be traced to your library.

If you take proper interest in a circulating library, treat it as a commercial enterprise, use the censor's blue pencil judiciously and play fair with all concerned I feel certain that you will find this a satisfactory side-line and one that will add materially to your income.

THE VALUE OF CONCENTRATING AND INDEXING YOUR DRUG STOCK.*

MAURICE P. SCHWARTZ.

Owing to the rapid development of the commercial end of the drug business, the prescription department, or back part of the store, is being called upon to carry practically all the drug stock, the front of the store being given over to the sale of soda, cigars, candy, magazines, photo supplies, stationery, drug sundries and various other side-lines. This condition has been largely brought about by the curtailment of the use of drugs, the employment of high priced preparations in the filling of physicians' prescriptions, and cut rates in general, so reducing profits, that additional revenues have been made necessary to meet the ever increasing overhead expense.

To remove the drug stock to the prescription department every available inch of space must of necessity be made use of, and the stock so arranged, as to be found as quickly as possible. The best method of course is to thoroughly index all the items in the prescription department, and in the case of those drugs and preparations having several common names, to list them under each of these,

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