



THE SOUTHWEST



(Left to right) Miss Donna Root, head of the travel bureau, and the author, specialize in advising the traveling public on a noncommercial basis.

A travel information bureau as an integral part of a public library may seem unique, but Clevelanders have long been accustomed to just this kind of coordinated service. Today the travel information bureau of the Cleveland Public Library ranks as one of the most popular specialized services offered to its patrons. Established more than 20 years ago by Miss Donna L. Root, the bureau has grown steadily in size and scope. It provides travel information in an advisory capacity without commercial aspects. Yet in rendering this service to a grateful public, it in no way encroaches on the domain of the travel agent. Actually it performs considerable spadework in his behalf. It promotes the cause of the travel industry as a whole while serving the individual in whatever manner he designates.

The backbone of the bureau is a collection of more than 50,000 current folders, brochures, and maps. These are secured directly from information bureaus, chambers of commerce, resorts, and promotional agencies, as well as from railroad, steamship, air, and bus lines. At least three copies of each folder are processed and put into a circulating file. Surplus copies are placed on a "free table," which is frequently referred to by the people who crowd around it, as a bargain table in the best tradition. The standard tools of any travel agency, such as the Hotel Red Book and the Railway Guide are available at all times. Travel magazines, both domestic and foreign, a current clipping and news release file, and a reference pamphlet file augment the other materials mentioned. But perhaps the greatest asset to the traveling public is the library's outstanding collection of more than 58,000 travel books. These range in type from the rare book category to the latest and most popular guidebook just off the press.

And who uses this material? Vacation planners, of course, come in large numbers. Some are ready for their



A Library

Travel Bureau

By Elizabeth R. Ord

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first travel experience, perhaps on a modest scale. Many others come regularly from season to season and year to year. Honeymoon couples are frequent visitors and there is a large clientele of inveterate globe-trotters. Some people have a serious purpose behind their trip, such as the business man flying to Egypt and the Gold Star mother making a pilgrimage to her son's grave in Belgium. Then there is that familiar and happy breed that travels continuously but never leaves home—the indefatigable arm-chair traveler.

Different motives introduce other people to our facilities. Families contemplating the inevitable move to other cities seek detailed information about their new place of residence. Travel literature never served a better purpose. Research bureaus and advertising agencies lean heavily on information gleaned from the travel files. Radio script writers, commercial artists, and newspaper reporters round out another grateful group. Students and club women who prepare papers pore over material from every corner of the globe.

Seasonal displays and exhibits are arranged frequently, with an eye to travel promotion. Posters, pictures, and photographs attract many an admiring and interested glance. Some exhibits are lent to outside agencies in full cooperation. Travel lectures and film programs have a permanent place in our working schedule. Book lists are prepared and widely distributed, for we mean what we say when we urge people to "read before you go."

For those of us who manage and staff the Travel Information Service there are no free trips or 10 percent gratuities. Our compensation comes solely from the pleasure and satisfaction afforded the individuals who seek our help and from the knowledge that one of the world's truly great libraries contributes a major share toward enlightened traveling.