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Reading Places (Paperback)

By Christine Pawley

University of Massachusetts Press, United States, 2010. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. This book recounts the history of an experimental regional library service in the early 1950s, a story that has implications far beyond the two Wisconsin counties where it took place. Using interviews and library records, Christine Pawley reveals the choices of ordinary individual readers, showing how local cultures of reading interacted with formal institutions to implement an official literacy policy. Central to the experiment were well-stocked bookmobiles that brought books to rural districts and the one-room schools that dotted the region. Three years after the project began, state officials and local librarians judged it an overwhelming success. Library circulation figures soared to two-and-a-half times their previous level. Over 90 percent of grade-school children in the rural schools used the bookmobile service, and their reading scores improved beyond expectation. Despite these successes, however, local communities displayed deeply divided reactions. Some welcomed the book-mobiles and new library services wholeheartedly, valuing print and reading as essential to the exercise of democracy, and keen to widen educational opportunities for children growing up on hardscrabble farms where books and magazines were rare. Others feared the intrusion of government into...



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