

SUMMARY OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The several discussion sessions served to underline points made by the Institute speakers, to bring forward some ideas not previously mentioned, and to describe practical applications found successful in situations familiar to the participants.

The most recurrent theme in the discussion period, centered around the problems of school library personnel. The difficulty of recruiting adequately trained librarians was, as might be expected, a paramount and persistent concern. Many thought that the most satisfactory solution appears to depend on the provision of legislation requiring that each school librarian have a minimum amount of training in library science at the undergraduate level. Many pointed out, however, that the exertion of such a pressure upon superintendents and principals was unrealistic if there were only a few places where library science training could be procured.

Consequently, the group felt that elementary courses in library science should be widely available. There was a general agreement that such courses should be offered in colleges and teacher training institutions in each state. Also, that these courses should be available through extension in strategically located centers throughout each state, and with classes scheduled for late afternoon, evening, and on Saturdays.

Recruitment of good teachers within the elementary schools was discussed. Almost all teachers within a given time must further their professional training. It was pointed out that this training could be taken in library science and that this opportunity be brought to the attention of teachers having an interest in the library. Those encouraged to take training, it was stressed, should be among the best teachers and not those wishing "to retire into librarianship." A number of specific examples of successful recruitment by this device were mentioned.

The group felt that recruitment could also take place among the undergraduate students who are required to take materials courses in order to fulfill teaching certification demands. High school and college counselors have in recent years been directing young people into consideration of elementary school training. These young people, it seemed to the discussants, provided a potentially fruitful source. The oft-repeated charge was again made that library school faculties are discouraging students from entering school librarianship, particularly elementary school library work. This was vehemently denied by representatives of the library schools in attendance, testifying that library school faculty members try to counsel students according to their abilities and interests.

The discussion revealed a wide variation in the training requirements required for those who were engaged in library work either full time or as a part-time teacher-librarian. Supervisors from some of the better developed school library systems were surprised to learn that in some areas teachers with no library science training whatever, are being used in library positions. Supervisors from those states with somewhat lower standards, replied that, while all deplored the situation, the lack of trained people provided no alternative. Despite this variation in actual practice there was positive agreement from all concerned on one point: that school librarians must have library training and, if possible, experience as teachers in addition.

The foregoing discussion led to a consideration of in-service training as a responsibility of supervisors. The many comments revealed that setting up such training was a wide-spread practice, but mostly for the teachers assigned to libraries, who had had little or no training in library work. The instances were rare where an in-service training activity could be conducted at relatively advanced levels. Even where the groups are mixed, containing fully trained librarians and those without training, it appeared to be common practice to plan the activities for the lower rather than the higher end of the scale.

Of the in-service training methods that were used the one-day workshop or institute appeared to be the most common. These one-day sessions are generally limited to a fairly small geographical area although in some instances as many as two or three counties are represented. It is a practice in many states to include school superintendents and principals, in an effort to help them to become aware of the problems of, and to awaken their interest, in the work of the library. The representatives from Alabama reported that in recent years they used successfully book selection projects which are set up in individual schools during the year. In these, the teachers and librarian, work together determining the book needs of the particular school and selecting materials to be purchased during the year. For all in-service training activities, it was pointed out that the initiation of them usually came from the state supervisors, although there were several examples of these activities being developed by local supervisors especially in the larger cities.

The discussion on minimum training also led briefly to the problems of satisfying the school teacher who wanted graduate library science credit for undergraduate courses in library science, or for courses which were taken in the College of Education. The consensus was that a firm stand on the part of all administrators of library schools and all library supervisors was the only solution emphasizing that graduate library science credit can be earned only through the satisfactory completion of graduate library science courses.

The second of the over-all discussion topics had to do with the selection and acquisition of library materials. A collection of materials was recognized as the starting point for the entire library program in the school. A well-conceived and executed program of services and activities cannot succeed if there is not an equally well-planned and available collection of books, journals, films, recordings, pictures, slides, and film-strips as a foundation.

It was pointed out that size of the book stock alone was not a paramount factor. A collection of 50,000 volumes would be worthless if it was not related to the interests, purposes, reading skill, and capacity of the school child. Thus practical and literal study of the actual needs of the child and his community in specific schools is the first basis for selection of materials.

While school library supervisors have final responsibility for the over-all development of the libraries in their charge the role of the individual school librarian is full and essential. Experience has shown that the most is accomplished when the supervisor actually assists the librarians by thoughtful counseling and through the provision of selection aids and tools.

There are many states and cities which limit acquisitions to specified titles from published lists of approved materials. When so stipulated by law, states originate lists to enable schools to receive state aid, and cities issue lists as a basis for soliciting legally required bids. The purpose is to protect school librarians from special interest and pressure groups, from censorship, and to ensure conformance to local prohibitions of materials on such subjects as sex education, religion, and political ideologies. The supervisor's office, it was pointed out, is often responsible for the compiling of approved lists and thus can influence collection development to a considerable degree.

Even where they are not legally required, approved, or at least annotated lists of new materials frequently are issued by the supervisor. As a basic selection tool, the Children's Catalog published by the H. W. Wilson Co., was universally recognized as an indispensable aid. It appeared that use of the pre-bound reinforced books is increasingly popular. So much so, the supervisors present felt, that availability in reinforced binding should always be indicated in book lists. As for budget provision for books testimony revealed a range from 32 cents per pupil to 75 cents in large cities, and \$2.68 or more in smaller cities and towns.

There was agreement that the main role of the supervisor in the selection of library materials should be advisory, aiding the librarian to procure a collection of sufficient size and variety that classroom teachers could have a wide choice. The result is to broaden both teacher and student. It was

pointed out that ephemeral materials available to schools at little cost, if carefully selected, will eke out an otherwise inadequate book fund.

Some discussion was held regarding suitable action when the use of some types of materials, such as sex instructional materials, were limited by school policy; is it still the right and responsibility of the librarian to buy for the library material which the classroom teacher could not easily use or give to her students? Most of the group felt that the supervisor should be able to work with the teacher, regardless of prescribed material areas, so as to help provide as rounded a choice possible of library materials for all students.

Another aspect of building a balanced collection was the ability of the teacher to handle and know all the materials necessary to teach effectively. Here the group felt that one of the most important accomplishments of the supervisors was the setting-up and maintenance of committees representing teachers and administrators who would work together for a well-rounded selection program. In this way, it was noted, the idea of books for students versus books for the library could be overcome so as to allow for maximum utilization of all materials for all phases of the teaching program. The group felt that most teachers are as capable of handling the necessary materials as are most school librarians. The problem is how to approach the over-burdened teacher, to whom library responsibilities are still in many places just another extra workload. In some school systems, pre-school workshops and conferences have helped to bring about improved librarian-teacher relationships. In any school more understanding of and consideration for the workload of the teacher would help bring about better library usage and more successful selection and cooperation policies.

Stimulated by the paper on censorship, problems surrounding censorship actions and their effect on school collections were thoroughly aired. As some members of the group felt that school policy was determined and stated by the school board and that the librarian's involvement would be slight, a poll of the conferees was taken. This revealed that, in actuality, only four of the school systems represented had prepared such statements or policies. Despite this evidence one member of the group pointed out that the school superintendent would always be the first to be approached with such problems, and thus top level action would be taken which would still eliminate the librarian's involvement with basic attacks until policy was formulated. The majority felt, however, that some stand must be taken ahead of time so as to reduce tensions and misunderstandings, and the possible interference with the normal operations of the library.

Several examples were given of incidents where libraries and librarians were directly concerned in censorship actions. In Alabama, an attempt was made to force labeling of all "subversive" books in the school libraries.

Fortunately, this idea was abandoned in view of the disproportionate expense and detail involved. In another state, action took the form of personal attacks on an English teacher, elsewhere the inclusion of different versions of the Bible in the school library was criticized. Many of the group felt that behind these incidents was the failure of librarians, as professionals in the field of book selection and use, to take the whole public--parents, community organizations, mass media--into their confidence. Wider understanding of the educational uses of all types of materials would minimize the possibility of censorship and unwarranted interference in school materials selection.

The third main topic of discussion considered the way the supervisor supervises. Though the school library supervisor has, potentially, great power and influence, these are brought to fruition only in the way the supervised respond to the supervisor's leadership. Both the science and the art of command must be understood and mastered.

In developing a supervisory program two basic considerations were developed. First of all the supervisor must realize that a successful program begins with accepting the individual librarian as he is. The supervisor will find that she has great variation in ability, interest, experience, and training among the personnel assigned to her. There will be librarians who have been in the same school for many years and others who have the educational qualifications but who are just beginning.

Accepting this first principle, a good supervisory program emphasizes that there is no single formula for a successful library program. Even in a large system a good library must operate in the framework of its individual school. General recommendations should be made, but must always be adapted to particular school needs.

A manual of general practices may prove to be a helpful device for the supervisor in the development of a good system-wide library program. The manual can detail the practices, but should emphasize the need for each librarian to select those which will assist him in giving the finest service to the students and faculty of his school. The manual should be suggestive, but not regulatory.

A library supervisor must develop close personal relationships with librarians, principals, and teachers. The supervisor is a director of a department as well as a supervisor. He may become defender of a cause (when he fights for the philosophy of the centralized library or works with an architect) or buffer between librarian and principal (when settling a point of minor irritation, such as a late lunch hour). It is the obligation of the supervisor for the sake of morale and prestige of the staff to do all in his power to keep the librarians' status on a level with the rest of the educational group.

A good supervisor improves as the program grows. Rarely is it possible for library school curricula to have included preparation for all the diverse and varied activities and decisions with which the supervisors may be faced. To meet these challenging situations the supervisor must rise to the occasion and thus broaden his scope of duties and activities. It may be setting-up a school library, cataloging, meeting with the guidance director to coordinate library and guidance activities, arranging for education week exhibits, or talking with teachers about utilization of library facilities--to mention a very few.

The supervisor should provide a challenge as well as guidance for the staff but they should be encouraged to make decisions for themselves. Group leadership is most effectual when work and leadership are allocated to members of the group. The supervisor's authority comes from her ability to see that decisions derived from group planning are carried out. Group conscienceness is best attained when the librarians have a feeling of department achievement as well as being a definite part of each school. Praise, if used discriminatingly, will help to build morale and stimulate growth.

Supervision may also become most effective through individual as well as group conferences. Individual conferences will allow a librarian to analyze his own problems and to feel that his opinion is respected. Where definite conclusions can be reached from suggestions of both librarian and supervisor conferences can be a means of growth for both. Careful preparation and planning are essential to all supervisory conferences.

One member described the supervisor as primarily a "trouble-shooter and general liaison officer." This definition, however, was not acceptable for, it was pointed out, it failed to emphasize the positive and initiating aspects of good leadership. These latter find expression in the development of a strong library program.

The peripheral activities of the supervisor were also noted with the values to the library and the school deriving from these activities:-countless informal (and uncalculated) contacts, attendance at professional meetings of administrators and teachers, participation in school institutes, meetings, and committees over and above those bearing directly on the library, formulation of in-service programs for teachers, and appearances before parents and other citizen groups.

This led to several statements pointing out the need for all school librarians to go outside the walls of their own professional group and attend meetings other than their own: meetings of school administrators, meetings of teachers, meetings of parent-teacher groups at national, state, and local levels, so that their problems, interests and activities will be recognized and identified as part of the whole broad picture of education. As a specific

application the group stressed the need for school librarians to write and publish more widely in the professional journals of administrators and teachers.

Finally one of the participants pointed up that in planning for good school library supervision these preparations seemed important:

1. To know the school system; to know what is being done in other departments so as to help the librarians correlate their work with that of the other departments.
2. To know the librarians, their personalities, interests, abilities and weaknesses; to be prepared to help them overcome weaknesses and develop latent talents.
3. To be readily available for conferences; to be as close as the telephone so any problems or misunderstandings may be aired quickly and not allowed to grow with contemplation.
4. To visit the libraries frequently; to become thoroughly familiar with the various school situations.
5. To be informed about curriculum, in-service programs, status, retirement, and many other things in order to answer questions intelligently.