

## Chapter VI

### BUILDING LIBRARY COLLECTIONS: NONBOOK MATERIALS

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A distinguished librarian in California believes that "books are basic" and that, "It's wicked to call a library a materials center."<sup>1</sup> But another equally distinguished librarian from California says, "the soundest and truest audio-visual enthusiasts I know are also book lovers--those who cherish books for the good they do to people and who transfer their enthusiasm to anything else that does a similar good to people. Goodness is no vested interest."<sup>2</sup> Fundamental to this chapter is the belief that the same basic principles apply to the building of the book collection that apply in the building of the nonbook materials collection.

Librarians are devoted to the printed word; they know its power and its meaning, its function and purpose. They appreciate the rich heritage received through books and printing, and they hope this indispensable medium of communication will not diminish. But they know also that individuals do not live and learn by words alone. Is it correct, then, to assume that books can always do the teaching job at hand or that they can do it better than other media? John Dewey in his Art as Experience has said, "Thinking directly in terms of colors, tones, images, is a different operation technically from thinking in words. . . . If all meanings could be adequately expressed by words, the arts of painting and music would not exist. There are values and meanings that can be expressed only by immediately visible and audible qualities and to ask what they mean in the sense of something that can be put into words is to deny their distinctive existence."<sup>3</sup>

Is it recognized that the motion picture camera can be used creatively just as the typewriter; and conversely, that the camera can be used just to duplicate something we already know like the ditto or mimeograph machine? Do librarians and teachers ever stop to analyze the educational process in terms of Lasswell's five-factor question, "Who is saying what to whom by what method and to what effect?"

The first responsibility of educators and supervisors is to understand the nature of the learning process; to know what they are doing to and for boys and girls in our schools today; to know what is happening to the school curriculum, and what is taking place in this revolution known as mass communication. A few of the recent books, films, and phonorecords that will give us background should be mentioned first. Basic to the selection of all instructional materials is a knowledge of the curriculum and its construction. Among the recent books in this field are: "Adapting the Secondary School

Program to the Needs of Youth, " Fifty-Second Yearbook, Part I,<sup>4</sup> "American Elementary School, " Thirteenth Yearbook, John Dewey Society;<sup>5</sup> and an older, but still very useful book, Changing the Curriculum; A Social Process,<sup>6</sup> by Alice Miel; a filmstrip, Core Curriculum Class in Action, 50 frames, (Wayne University, 1949); a discussion by Harry H. Giles, Teacher-Pupil Planning Techniques (recorded in two parts, 22 min. each, 33 1/3 rpm by Educational Recordings Services, Los Angeles, California); and a film, Practicing Democracy in the Classroom (22 min., Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, 1953).

For an understanding of the nature and effects of communication materials and media there are two recent works. The first, "Mass Media and Education,"<sup>7</sup> is useful to learn how mass media are affecting the shaping of behavior patterns, the shaping of attitudes and outlooks, the effects on leisure time. Librarians and teachers need to know all that research can tell about communication, for it is the process by which they accomplish their educational purposes. The second work, and one that should be read by all educators, is Edgar Dale's Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching.<sup>8</sup> It is not only a beautifully-made book, but it is also a most comprehensive, most up-to-date, and most clearly written exposition of the nature and functions of all types of instructional media from the felt-board to the field trip, from the tachistoscope to television. There is an entirely new chapter on color as an aid in teaching and learning; and the bibliographies of books, articles, films, filmstrips, and phonorecords are extremely valuable for anyone who is beginning a collection or one who is strengthening an already established collection. Also useful for background are the following nonbook materials; a filmstrip entitled, Large-City Audio-Visual Organization, 44 frames (Young America, 1948) which describes the work of the Department of Libraries, Visual Aids, and Radio, under the Board of Education of Newark, New Jersey; a phonodisc, The Improvement of Teaching Through Audio-Visual Materials, by Edgar Dale and James D. Finn (recorded in two parts, 22 minutes each, 33 1/3 rpm, Educational Recordings Services, 1951); and the following films: New Tools for Learning (19 minutes, Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, 1952) and Bridges for Ideas (28 minutes, University of Southern California, 1951).

As said in the beginning, the basic principles and criteria for the evaluation of books apply also to the evaluation of nonbook materials. Generally stated, these factors are truth and art. The first includes factual accuracy, authoritativeness, balance, integrity, and, when appropriate, recency. The second is marked by stimulating presentation, imagination, vision, creativeness, style appropriate to the idea, vitality, and distinction. Physical characteristics of form, organization, and technical features are also studied in determining choice.

In establishing policies for selection one might consider the following questions: Do librarians honestly apply the criteria for evaluation and then select the best materials available in terms of their content and use? Or, is the first concern with physical format? If librarians do what they say they believe in, the effort inevitably will be to build not just collections of books but, rather, instructional materials centers. There is certainly a strong trend in this direction today. This does not imply, however, that physical format can be ignored for it is often the technical factors which militate against the use of nonbook materials. By the time they have won the "battle of the speeds" in phonorecord equipment, or have at last afforded a diamond stylus for longer wear of discs, or have discarded the disc and embraced tape, the stage may have been reached where none of these is a necessity - a time, not too far distant, when beautiful music and ultra high-fidelity in sound will be attained via an electric eye or a beam of light. In the meantime, a generation of youngsters will go through our schools, who should not be denied the best that is available. Therefore, do not get bogged down in the gadgets and the machines involved, but consider above all else the message and how it can be delivered most effectively.

Are materials selected in terms of their relationship to each other? Films are many times more effective if they are reinforced with reading or discussion, or listening, or with the study of a map or chart. Very few instructional media do the job alone. Edith Sitwell's recording of Facade would be meaningless without the printed words. Yet, only the sound of the background music and her melodious voice give the full beauty and humor of the poetry.

Do teachers have a strong voice in the selection of nonbook materials? Obviously it is the teacher's prerogative to choose the materials that will be used in the classroom, but the individual teacher, and teachers' groups and committees must be given an opportunity to preview, audition, and evaluate all of the available materials in their areas of speciality, whether those materials are to be borrowed, rented, or purchased for the collection.

Teacher responsibility for selection is closely related to teacher use of materials. Librarians want teachers to use the very best resources of the library and the community, yet the time spent in classroom teaching, in conferences and meetings, frequently makes it impossible for teachers to find out what is available. Think what might be accomplished if every teacher had one period a day assigned to the materials center for the purpose of aiding in the selection and production of new materials and helping to weed out and discard the obsolete. What a wonderful way this would be to insure the integration of the instructional materials and the curriculum. But such a plan of "bankers' hours" is completely unrealistic. The next best thing is to involve teachers in informal group evaluations, provide workshops and institutes, hold regularly scheduled previews and auditions, send materials

freely to classrooms, and publish catalogs and subject bibliographies like those very useful ones prepared by Newark's Department of Libraries, Visual Aids and Radio.

Do pupils have a voice in selection? Pupils use the materials not only in classroom groups, but also as individuals in the library to satisfy their needs for information or recreation. Hence it is important that they be given a voice in selection. One of the most important teaching functions is to develop in young people discrimination and appreciation. This can be accomplished in many different ways, in the classroom and library, but one effective way is to give young people some responsibility for the selection of materials that go into their libraries.

The selection of nonbook materials is not a matter of checking a basic list, for there is none. However there are such comprehensive aids as the Educational Film Guide and the Filmstrip Guide, and current publications as Educational Screen, the Saturday Review, the Educational Film Library Association, Evaluations (3" x 5" cards), Scholastic Teacher, and the Educational Television News, to mention just a few. There are innumerable bibliographies and selected lists in almost every subject field, and these must be made available through the instructional materials center or library. As a general policy, however, the building of the materials collection must be considered as an integral and essential part of curriculum planning and development. This involves not only selection aids, but the active cooperation of the whole school staff. This means that in the selection process the supervisor's role is one of leadership and organization; one of providing the proper setting so that actual selection and selection policies can be developed at the level of use in the individual school and school library.

Nonbook materials, to be effective, must be housed in adequate quarters, serviced by professionally trained staff members, used under proper conditions, and above all, they must be available for classroom or library reference when needed in the teaching process. For this reason city and county systems should buy rather than rent materials that will be repeatedly used so that over a period of years a representative collection of filmstrips, films, phonorecords, maps, charts, globes, and the like can be built up and made readily available when needed. The responsibility for obtaining the budget for materials and equipment will rest largely with the supervisor. Budget requests, if they are to be given consideration by administrative officers and boards must be based on a study of actual needs and costs for an adequate instructional materials program. Obviously the amount requested for materials and services depends upon the amount of equipment, materials, and staff already available and the scope of the proposed program. There is always a strong inclination to allocate or apportion library funds by types of materials to be purchased, allowing, for example, so much for periodicals, for maps, for phonorecords, for films. This method insures

the purchase of a variety of communication media. However, this may or may not result in a collection suited to the needs of the curriculum, and sometimes results in the development of permanent classroom collections which serve only one teacher. Therefore, the allocations should be somewhat flexible and need to be adjusted from year to year so that the collection will contain the best that is available in all types of format. It is difficult to appraise the value of nonbook materials in terms of dollars and cents, yet some decision will have to be made about the potential use of each phonorecord, film, filmstrip, or map before purchase. Is it worth the teachers' and pupils' time? Is it worth the effort and expense involved in securing it? Is it better than something else that might be substituted for it? Is a sixty dollar film actually as expensive as a six dollar book when considered in terms of the number of potential users of each one? If neither can do the job of the other, is it valid to compare them in terms of cost? Questions such as these can be answered satisfactorily only by those persons who are acquainted with the needs of pupils and teachers, who know all types of instructional materials, and who know how to use them effectively.

Finally, as teachers make greater and greater demands for nonbook materials, it becomes increasingly important that these materials are not segregated or dissociated from books. For in the words of our California colleague, "We give our readers not wax, not phonographs, but the spoken word - the poem, the story, the drama told aloud. We give them not film, not projectors and beaded screens, but the vision of life recreated for their pleasure and understanding. These are the things that books are made of too, and therein lies real unity. When sight and sound are fully accepted in the world of books, when the unity of content is fully recognized, we will have better libraries, better readers, and better people."<sup>9</sup>

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