

EVALUATING SCHOOL LIBRARY FACILITIES

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The primary purpose of instructional supervision is to facilitate the learning of students by improving the conditions that affect it. Since sound planning for improvement requires an accurate appraisal of the strengths and limitations of existing instructional programs, evaluation is a major responsibility of the supervisor.

The evaluation of school libraries has undergone marked changes in recent decades as a result of changes in educational measurement and evaluation. Formerly, appraisal considered only the material aspects of the library program and such elements as budget, holdings, and staff were compared with the standards of state and regional accrediting associations. Today, interest centers upon the effectiveness of the library's service, and attempts are made to judge the contribution of the library program to the personal development of the individual pupil. Appraisal of the adequacy of library facilities continues as a significant aspect of evaluation, however, because of the close relationship between this factor and service.

This chapter discusses the evaluation of library facilities--budget, staff, materials, quarters, and equipment. The next chapter considers the evaluation of library services. It should be remembered throughout both discussions, however, that a sound evaluation of the school library requires a consideration of both facilities and services in terms of their effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the school and the library. Also, since there are marked differences in the specific responsibilities of the school library supervisor in the state agency and in the city or unified county system in evaluating the adequacy of library facilities, the following treats separately the work of each.

The state school library supervisor participates both indirectly and directly in the evaluation of library facilities in the schools of the state. The formulation of state standards for school libraries and the collection, organization, and interpretation of statistics are examples of her indirect participation; appraisals of libraries in individual schools constitute her direct role in evaluation.

The most significant of the "indirect" activities of the state school library supervisor in evaluation is the formulation of requirements for the certification of school librarians and of standards for budget, materials, quarters, and equipment in elementary and secondary libraries. Although the limiting

characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative standards are widely recognized, their proven value in stimulating and helping administrators and librarians in providing basic library facilities justifies their continuation. The development of adequate state standards requires a realistic appraisal of current conditions in school libraries in the state and familiarity with national and regional standards and school library development in other states.

The need for revision of school library standards and certification requirements in many states is readily apparent when the present state standards are compared with the national standards, School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow,<sup>1</sup> and the certification requirements with the recent standards formulated by the A. L. A. Board of Education for Librarianship<sup>2</sup> for use by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education in accrediting undergraduate library programs. Since the key answer to improvement in school libraries lies in an increase in the number of qualified librarians employed, it might be helpful to note briefly the major differences in present state certification standards and those of the A. L. A. Board of Education for Librarianship. The A. L. A. standards are predicted on several assumptions which are somewhat revolutionary. One of these is that the basic library science professional education should be the same for the part-time as for the full-time school librarian. Another is that the amount of undergraduate work in library science should not be so great as to limit the amount of general and professional education essential for all teachers. Accordingly, the standards specify a curricula totalling not less than fifteen and not more than eighteen semester hours. There is also the implication in the standard governing the curriculum that the education of a school librarian should prepare for service in both the elementary and secondary school.

A comparison of the findings in Butler's<sup>3</sup> 1952 study of state certification requirements for school librarians with the A. L. A. standards for undergraduate library education shows several marked differences. One of the most striking is the variation existing in many states between the requirements for elementary school librarians and those for high school librarians. Forty-seven states have certification requirements of some sort for secondary school librarians but only thirty-eight stipulate them for the elementary school librarian. Forty-two states have both library and professional education requirements for the secondary school librarian but only twenty-eight states make similar stipulations for the elementary school librarian.<sup>4</sup> Another major difference between the A. L. A. and state standards is the number of hours of library science required. Of the forty-two states specifying hours in their requirements, twenty-two states have minimum requirements which are less than the fifteen semester hours recommended in the national standards, eleven states stipulate minimum requirements which fall within the prescribed limits, and eight states have minimum requirements in excess of the eighteen semester hours. In five states pro-

fessional library training standards vary in relation to the size of schools and in eight states the requirements are governed by either the part-time or full-time status of the librarian.<sup>5</sup>

An encouraging note in the Butler study was the indication that many states are considering changes in certification.<sup>6</sup> The rather general acceptance by school librarians and library educators of the concept of a fifteen semester hour minimum undergraduate training in library science for all school librarians regardless of the size or grade level of the school suggests that the adaptation of state standards to include this provision may be a fairly rapid development. Close cooperation between the state school library supervisor and teacher training agencies will be necessary if the raising of standards is to be effective. The long range plans of Minnesota and Illinois merit particular attention in this respect. Both states formulated new standards and set specific dates several years in the future when the requirements would become mandatory. The supervisors worked with representatives of teacher training agencies to develop uniform undergraduate programs in which course offerings are keyed to the state requirements.

The assumption that undergraduate training in library science should be limited in order to leave time for the general and professional education of the school librarian also appears to have general acceptance among school library leaders. Standards in twenty-two states, however, specify for at least one of the library certificates more than eighteen semester hours in library science, and in fourteen of these states the requirements for service in larger schools or for a permanent certificate stipulate twenty-four or more semester hours in library science. At the same time, no one of these twenty-two states requires a five-year program or a master's degree.<sup>7</sup> As a result, teacher training agencies in many of these states are conducting library education programs which offer a full year rather than a semester's work at the undergraduate level. The A. L. A. standards are based on the assumption that the basic undergraduate library science program is not terminal and should be articulated with the graduate library school program in the same geographic area. To be consistent with this pattern, state standards should limit undergraduate library science preparation and require graduate study. Before changes are made in certification requirements supervisors will need to answer the following questions: (1) For what types of library service should the graduate of the basic undergraduate sequence be eligible? (2) Should graduate study in other than accredited library schools be approved? (3) Should teacher training agencies be encouraged to develop graduate programs?

Another weakness of state certification requirements is their failure to stipulate the general areas of curriculum content deemed desirable in the training of the librarian. In 1952, according to the Butler survey, only nineteen states designated specific areas in library science required for

certification.<sup>8</sup> Thus, theoretically, it is possible in many states for a person trained for college or university library work to become a librarian in an elementary or high school library, providing, of course, that other requisites for the position are met.

The need for teachers and administrators to know library materials and to understand the purposes and values of the school library is generally recognized by librarians. Required courses in library materials for elementary and secondary school teachers is one long range method through which this need may be met. The state supervisor has an opportunity and a responsibility to work for the inclusion of a course in library materials in the state certification requirements for teachers.

Standards pertaining to the size of the clerical and professional staff, the materials collection, budget, housing and equipment are also essential. National standards suggest desirable goals but the state supervisor must decide how far toward these ideals it is desirable to move as too large an increase in quantitative standards may retard rather than accelerate the expansion of library facilities. Other questions which need answering before standards are developed in final form are: (1) Should statements be qualitative or quantitative? (2) Should only minimum essentials be established or should standards be formulated for average and maximum service? (3) How accurately do the proposed standards reflect the judgment of experienced school librarians in the state? Representatives of the groups affected by the results of standards should be included in their development--librarians, teachers, instructional supervisors, administrators, and members of the state department of education.

The annual collection, organization, and interpretation of statistics is another evaluative activity of the state school library supervisor. Accurate information about the library staff, library expenditures, and the materials collection when properly interpreted and used furnish a basis for measuring development, correcting deficiencies, and planning for improvement.

A possible service of the state supervisor in evaluation is to encourage librarians to evaluate their own libraries. Experienced librarians sometimes hesitate to embark on an evaluation program because of uncertainty about procedures and skepticism about whether the results are worth the time and effort expended. Critical accounts in the state bulletin or on conference programs by librarians of their work in evaluation--the instruments used and the results of their use--are helpful in reassuring doubtful librarians. Also useful are articles in the state bulletin about the purpose and procedures in evaluation and the instruments available for such work, e. g., A Planning Guide for the High School Library Program,<sup>9</sup> the Illinois Consensus Study Inventories on the school library,<sup>10, 11</sup> the Evaluative Criteria.<sup>12</sup>

The direct activities of the state supervisor in evaluation are chiefly those involved in appraising library facilities in the individual schools for purposes of grants, accreditation, or classification. During the day or half-day spent in the school the supervisor has to judge both the adequacy of library facilities and the effectiveness of library service and make recommendations for their improvement. Standards supply general guides for the appraisal but judgment is necessary in their application since the content of the curriculum and the method of presenting it determines to a great extent the type of facilities desirable in the individual school.

This description of the activities of the state school library supervisor in evaluation may suggest that a major part of the work is of an indirect nature. In actual practice, the evaluation of the individual libraries occupies a greater proportion of the supervisor's time than the indirect activities. Both phases of the work are essential to the improvement of school library service in the state.

Supervisors in city and county school systems have greater opportunity and responsibility for carrying on activities directly related to evaluation of staff and facilities than state supervisors. An important, albeit a controversial aspect of their evaluation responsibilities is that of appraising the librarian's effectiveness. The supervisor's role in the selection and placement of librarians will be noted first because these activities while not in themselves a part of evaluation do have a direct relationship to the librarian's success on the job.

In selecting librarians, the city supervisor has an obligation to enforce state and regional certification requirements and an opportunity to raise them if it seems desirable. Supervisors in states lacking certification requirements for elementary school librarians have an important responsibility for formulating requirements in library science training for them. Participation on interviewing boards and in other examining capacities enables the supervisor to study the librarian's experience and potentialities prior to the supervisory act. Her knowledge of the characteristics of the schools in which library vacancies exist--the type of neighborhood and the personality and expectations of the administrator--helps her to decide upon the probable success of the applicant in a given position. The supervisor's responsibility for placement is a continuing one. Making transfers of new librarians that seem timely is as important as the initial placement. Many a beginning librarian who fails in his first assignment is saved for the profession by reallocation in a different school in the same city.

Whether supervisors should share with administrators the responsibility for judging the efficiency of teachers and librarians is one of the big issues in supervision today. Generally, supervisors have been quite emphatic in denying the desirability of their participation in teacher rating. They point

out that rating makes the supervisor an administrator rather than a co-worker of the teacher and destroys the happy and close relationship necessary for working out improvements in the school program. Those who advocate rating suggest that supervisors continually reflect their grading of teachers whether they rate them systematically or not. Their top group receive committee appointments and special assignments; their classrooms and libraries are selected for visits and demonstrations. Advocates also maintain that probably no one is in a better position than the supervisor to judge the teacher or librarian's effectiveness. How far library supervisors should go in the formal rating of librarians depends in large measure upon the practices in the system in which they serve. In large school systems where formal rating schemes are in use for the teaching staff, it would seem desirable to provide similar rating for librarians. The development of self-appraisal forms for the librarian's own use is a device the supervisor might use to encourage individual improvement. When such forms are developed cooperatively by librarians, administrators, and supervisors, the entire group gains in understanding of the characteristics of good librarianship.

A continuing evaluation of the strengths and limitations of library facilities in the school system is necessary if the supervisor is to plan systematically for future improvement. The soundest procedure for such appraisal is one in which each school librarian with the cooperation of his faculty evaluates both the facilities and services of his library. From such a study will come evidence of what each library is doing, what the library could do with its present facilities that it is not doing, and what the library might do but cannot because of limitations in facilities. The evaluation of the individual library will not only help the librarian to plan improvements but also will indicate to the supervisor some of the general needs of the entire system. The planning for a system-wide evaluation should be a cooperative endeavor: librarians, teachers, instructional supervisors and administrators should help to decide on the purposes, procedures, and measuring instruments for the evaluation.

It is possible and frequently justifiable to appraise only part of the library program each year. Two aspects of library facilities of primary importance in their effect upon library service which might be chosen early for the evaluation are the materials collection and a time study of the librarian's activities. In appraising the materials collection, an effort should be made to evaluate not only the existing collections but also the procedures through which books and non-print materials are selected for the system. Selection routines should provide for wide participation by librarians and teachers. Care should be taken in compiling recommended or approved lists of materials to allow for careful consideration of requests for titles not included. Any procedure which permits an arbitrary rejection by a supervisor of a title recommended by a teacher or librarian may destroy the cooperative

approach to selection essential if library materials are to meet the needs of individual schools and teaching departments.

Library service in many schools today is less effective than it might be because of the amount of time the librarian is required to devote to clerical and technical activities. A time study of the activities of all the librarians in the system is frequently helpful in convincing the administration of the need for additional clerical assistance or for the organization of a centralized acquisition and technical processing center in school systems without them.

Although a well-trained library staff, a library materials collection selected and organized to meet the needs of the school community, and library quarters planned and equipped to stimulate use are not in themselves a guarantee of good library service, their provision increases the probability of effective service. The work of the library supervisor on state and local levels in evaluating these elements of the library program contributes significantly, therefore, to the continuing improvement of library service.

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