

## Designing Facilities for School Library Materials Centers

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As libraries were established in a few secondary schools in America at the turn of the century, in all probability those responsible felt that they faced insurmountable problems. These pioneer libraries were placed wherever space could be spared in buildings not planned to accommodate them at all. In retrospect, it seems remarkable that school administrators and librarians of the early 1900's could arrange library equipment and materials as effectively as they often did in the small and unsuitable areas then designated for libraries.

Sixty years later, designing new or renovated quarters for school library services is one of the most complex and challenging problems school library or materials specialists face. The buildings they help to plan represent their concepts of the role of the library in education today, as well as their ability to influence school administrators and architects to accept their ideas. The amount of space allocated for library services, the nature and location of the special areas designated, and specific provisions for the housing and dissemination of the educational media considered legitimate library materials—all these tell a community what the planners believe to be a good school library and what services may be expected from it.

Winston Churchill is often quoted as having said that we shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us. Recognition of the truth of his statement only contributes to the insecurity a thoughtful school librarian must surely feel today.

No qualified school librarian would seriously question that the plan for library or materials services should precede the building. Nor would one seriously question that once a school building is a reality, its physical provisions control to some degree the nature of the educational program it houses or the extent to which a desired program can be implemented. Surely there is agreement today among school librarians that they must work as part of a team to determine the best educational program for a given school situation, to develop a "custom-built" program of library service supporting it, and to design the facilities to make this service possible.

But one can hardly overemphasize the difficulties in planning facilities for an educational program in a state of rapid change. In the United States today there is widespread, continuing, critical evaluation

of educational goals, school organization, classroom procedures, and provisions for guidance and independent pupil study. Professional educators are now giving leadership in encouraging experimentation in these areas. There are also articulate spokesmen representing industry and government, as well as parents and other citizens who support this experimentation or insist that there is too little of it too late.

Increasingly there are evidences of radical changes in elementary and secondary schools. As yet there has not been enough serious professional study of these innovations to indicate their value or to provide a sound basis for predicting any lessening of experimentation. The only characteristic of education that seems certain today is that it is changing, although not yet as rapidly as the society it serves.

It is certain that the school facilities designed and constructed in 1965 will be operating well into the twenty-first century, in most cases. It follows, then, that effective planning for school library services must be geared to a world of change. There must be recognition of things as they are in the educational world and identification of obvious trends which point to general practices in the schools of the future with special relevance for school materials services.

It follows as surely, however, that school facilities built for tomorrow must have the fullest possibilities for adaptability, to accommodate as well as possible changes not now foreseen.

An Educational Facilities Laboratories' report, The Cost of a Schoolhouse,<sup>1</sup> predicts these major characteristics of educational planning that will affect school house construction in the immediate future: (1) small spaces will be multipliable at will and at once; (2) large spaces will be divisible at will and at once; (3) space will be added and subtracted at will; (4) some schools will be convertible and shared; (5) children will learn from machines and teachers; (6) the environment will be dejuvenilized; (7) there will be new forms and surfaces; (8) there will be a more precisely controlled environment; and (9) groups of schools will be built together.

As each of these characteristics is discussed fully in the report, there are many implications for materials services. The needed flexibility in use of space with large or small groups and with individuals supports modular construction in school libraries as has been proved effective in college and public libraries. Placing more responsibility on learners earlier for planning their own programs and giving them more freedom, as well as responsibility and individual help, suggests the necessity for more library space designed for independent study.

The new building materials and architectural forms encourage less permanence in buildings, which should gladden the heart of any librarian who has ever struggled to remodel, working around permanent load-bearing walls or in a situation where expansion seems impossible. Better control of environmental factors, such as temperature, humidity, noise, light, and ventilation, should improve conditions

for the comfort of people as well as for the maintenance of materials in libraries. These are only a few examples of the ways in which general school construction trends may directly affect the planning of school library quarters.

It is revealing to survey current educational literature to identify the significant trends in teaching methods or school organization that suggest necessary changes in school library services and the facilities that house them. While these trends differ somewhat for elementary and secondary school programs, there is a surprising degree of similarity, too.

In a stimulating report of architectural change resulting from educational experimentation in the high schools, the Educational Facilities Laboratories give this vivid explanation of the concerns of modern educators for change: "Worried educators began to feel that the American high school was in danger of becoming a Stanley Steamer heading for a rocket base on a six-lane, computer-controlled expressway. In its own day the Stanley Steamer was an excellent automobile, but it no longer fits the world as the world operates today."<sup>2</sup>

The recommendations in 1959 of a Commission of the National Association of Secondary School Principals headed by J. Lloyd Trump are too well known to warrant detailed discussion here. It should be noted that these recommendations have received serious consideration nationwide and that they are being implemented to some degree in numerous secondary schools. In any serious discussion of the school of the future the Trump report seems basic.

This report<sup>3</sup> advocates a number of changes that require school library support and, in turn, affect the type of facilities that should be planned for materials services. Chiefly these are the organization of large and small groups of pupils for special learning experiences, rather than the inflexible grouping of thirty or thirty-five pupils in a class; a school day in which pupils spend from thirty to forty per cent of their time in independent study; the use of all possible technological advances in educational media in planning instruction; and team teaching, requiring teachers to do a different type of planning and preparation for instruction.

An instructional program implementing these recommendations requires a library planned as a learning laboratory, filled with carefully chosen printed and audiovisual materials in sufficient quantity to meet the varied needs of individuals and groups.

The Educational Facilities Laboratories report, Profiles of Significant Schools: High Schools 1962 suggests that much learning will be accomplished by students involved in independent study. Libraries are defined as resource centers with more books, tapes, films, records, programmed learning, and other media. Independent study space is presented as a need throughout the school. Changes in space and schedules are assumed necessary for students with many needs for materials to use in independent study.

The provision of numerous individual study areas, or carrels, in the library seems warranted, although all such areas need not be in one central place. Such provision in the library does not lessen the need for special areas for both large and small groups of pupils, if one considers the total instructional program.

The Trump plan clearly suggests the need for more space carefully designed for teachers to use as work space in curriculum planning, in evaluation, selection or production of instructional materials, and in independent study or research related to instructional responsibilities. The value of providing some of these areas for faculty use as a part of the library quarters or closely related to them seems obvious.

Team teaching is an innovation affecting elementary as well as secondary schools. A recent report, Schools for Team Teaching,<sup>4</sup> describes the buildings planned for ten elementary or junior high schools throughout the United States which use team teaching.

In an "Epilogue" which gives general suggestions for such building programs one finds the conclusion that team programs seem to encourage development of a non-graded school organization. It is stated that as students cut across grade lines, there is usually a greater emphasis on self-directed or individual study. With regard to space, this tendency indicates a radical change in the size and scope of the school library, encouraging development of a central instructional resource center.

Here one sees the same needs earlier identified for secondary schools for more individual study space in the library and for more facilities planned for teacher consideration or production of materials. The obvious requirement of a variety of educational media in quantity to challenge individual pupils is as desirable as in the high school. In the schools described, this is particularly true of pupils in the middle or intermediate grades. In some of these experimental schools, the self-contained classroom, which also requires library services, is maintained through the primary grades, with a gradual introduction of team teaching and more independent study in the middle grades.

The standards<sup>5</sup> for school library programs published by the American Library Association in 1960 seem almost conservative when viewed in relation to the needs for library services implied in current recommendations for school improvement. A careful re-reading of these standards indicates that they are today, as four years ago, a valuable aid in designing school library quarters. They encourage creative, cooperative planning to meet the needs of the school to be served and give much specific help in quantitative analysis of materials, equipment, furnishings, and space.

Yet the school librarians who gasped in 1960 at the ratios of materials, library personnel, and space suggested in these national standards do not seem nearly as shocked today to hear of schools that already far exceed these standards in one way or another. So it

goes, as Frances Henne often predicted! The Melbourne High School Library in Brevard County, Florida, for example, seats sixty per cent of a student body of more than 800. The Oak Ridge Elementary Schools in Tennessee recently reported an average of more than twenty-two books per pupil in their libraries.

There is the continuing necessity for a realistic appraisal of what is required in materials, personnel, or space to provide library services for quality programs of education. The school library specialists who participate in developing plans for remodeling or constructing new library facilities must recognize their responsibility to speak or write in a forceful and knowledgeable fashion about these requirements. They must be able to explain the reasoning back of their recommendations, in language familiar to other educators, and to quote organizations or other specialists known and respected who support their requests. While experience indicates that some compromise is inevitable in planning most school construction, the materials specialist must be sure that compromise affecting library quarters is made only with full knowledge of actual needs for library services and of the results to be expected in limited services if there is limited provision.

Just how should the school materials specialist be involved in planning library facilities? This question was asked recently in conversation with Dr. Harold Cramer, School Plant Planning Consultant in the Florida State Department of Education. He promptly provided a brief, well-written bulletin, Preparation of Educational Specifications,<sup>(6)</sup> which his department has prepared as an aid to school personnel in planning or remodeling school buildings.

This bulletin<sup>(6)</sup> traces historically the concept of the need for a statement of educational specifications as a basis for planning a functional building. Responsibilities and roles are defined for the Board of Education, the Superintendent, the instructional staff, the architect, the locally designated supervisor of planning, consultants from various sources, and laymen and pupils.

The chief responsibility for writing educational specifications is allocated to the instructional staff, who are most closely related to the program. While it is assumed that specialists on this staff, such as a librarian, will assume responsibility for writing specifications for their areas, it is emphasized that those who will use these service areas should also participate in considering these specifications.

In describing the architect's function, there is a clear statement that he should not be expected to assume responsibilities for educational planning but should advise on matters for which his experience and training qualify him. Dr. Cramer suggested tactfully that neither should school materials specialists assume the responsibility of making scaled drawings of library quarters with placement of equipment and furnishings comparable to those neat little plans in brochures from the equipment firms.

This is assumed to be the architect's function, implementing the educational specifications provided. Dr. Cramer further suggested that professional library schools should teach students the techniques of planning and writing educational specifications and of reading blue-prints, with no concern for trying to make amateur architects out of them.

As to content of specifications, it is recommended that a statement be provided of the philosophy which directs the program, followed by a description of the nature of the program and the activities expected to take place in its operation. Highly desirable is a description of the spaces in the school plant, showing relationships to the functions which they must serve. In relation to these spaces, a detailed statement of needed furniture and equipment for each area should be given with number, size, and function. Schematic diagrams such as circle drawings are considered helpful in showing relationships of areas.

Librarians who are not experienced in planning facilities are concerned with how detailed the information provided should be. The Florida bulletin <sup>6</sup> suggests that it be complete enough for the architect to develop an acceptable solution to the school design problem, but not be so specific as to be restrictive as the architect uses his talents and professional training to solve the problems effectively.

Supervisors of materials services at the system or state level often give excellent leadership in planning for new or improved library facilities. They may encourage publications that give special aid in library planning and assist in writing or editing them. They may serve as consultants for individual schools or school systems. In planning in-service education opportunities for the librarians and other educators in the system served, supervisors may encourage some opportunities for workshops, institutes, or visitation programs to encourage better planning for school library facilities. They may help to plan special opportunities for librarians and other educators to meet with architects for their mutual enlightenment. The library education agencies should work hand-in-hand with state and local supervisors in developing such programs.

A new publication <sup>7</sup> this fall in the area of planning library facilities is The School Library, Facilities for Independent Study in the Secondary School, written jointly by Ralph E. Ellsworth, Director of Libraries at the University of Colorado, and Hobart D. Wagener, an architect.

If school librarians can get past the introductory chapters without losing either tempers or confidence in the qualifications of the authors, there is much helpful information in the sections that follow. For some reason the point-of-view presented earlier is that developmentally school libraries are far behind college libraries in this country in experimentation, in acceptance as faculty members by the educators they serve, in recognition through increased salaries, in their own understanding of the meaning of the library as a teaching instrument, and even in the development of audio-visual programs.

Hopefully, the authors assume that school librarians may now begin the upward climb, beginning in the mid-sixties at the level at which the college librarians found themselves in the mid-thirties.

Once past this comedy of errors, one finds in the report<sup>7</sup> some sound recommendations for a modern program of school materials services. These generally seem based on knowledge of technological advances and trends in curriculum development, school organization, and teaching methods. The concept of the school library as a materials center is firmly established and suggestions are made for facilities designed to implement this type program.

Of particular value are the treatment of the controversial issue of centralization or decentralization, the provision of pupil facilities for independent study, the types of facilities needed for local production of materials and the work space needed by the teachers, librarians, and other media specialists.

Decentralization of the school library is opposed on the basis of increased costs for materials and for staff. It is recognized that a compromise between complete decentralization and centralization may be possible and desirable in large schools without economic worries. This conclusion is the same as that reached in the Florida program this fall and released in a mimeographed statement to local school authorities by the School Plant Division of the State Department of Education.

No such professional support can be recommended for the statement by Mr. Ellsworth and Mr. Wagener that in the lower grades the students will not need to go so deeply into sources and that their needs can be met by a generous collection of books and materials in the rooms where they are learning.

This book<sup>7</sup> is profusely illustrated with photographs or diagrams of school library facilities, and original drawings to show lay-out or design of areas or equipment. The second section, "A Gallery of Prototype Architectural Designs," shows ways to give physical expression to the program of library or materials services earlier described. These designs suggest a variety of solutions to educational problems and are well worth serious study. There is an excellent bibliography at the end of the book suggesting further reading in this subject.

Considering the most recent materials suggesting the school library of the future, recognizing the types of school materials facilities now in operation, and not forgetting that many children are in schools today which do not offer any library service at all, what generalizations can be made concerning the planning of school library facilities?

It seems reasonable to assume that:

- (1) The time is approaching when library services will be offered in carefully planned and furnished quarters in most of the elementary and secondary schools in this nation.

- (2) The school library will be a materials center, physically planned for disseminating the various educational media pertinent in the school program and designed to serve as a resource center for curriculum planning, general instructional support, and for teaching the process of free inquiry.
- (3) The library will offer special services to teachers and supervisors, to large or small groups of pupils, and to individuals interested in independent programs of study or of worthwhile enrichment activities.
- (4) The library quarters will be a group of special purpose areas, planned with regard to their function, their use, and their supervision, with a planned relationship of areas, whether in one central place or scattered throughout one or more buildings.
- (5) Possibilities for expansion and for change will be an important consideration in new or remodeled libraries. Operable walls, modular construction, general flexibility of space and construction materials will be considered.
- (6) The changing concept of the role of the library in an educational program emphasizing the need for independent study for a large part of the school day will result in more and better facilities for independent uses of the library. Study carrels and many other small areas may be set apart by shelving or clear glass partitions.
- (7) The newer school library programs will recognize more realistically the necessity for a school library staff, including specialists in the various services and materials of the library. The ratio of professional personnel to pupils and teachers will be sufficient to provide the library services needed and wanted. The size of the staff will affect radically the type and location of quarters desirable for library services, since there will be adequate staff to supervise these quarters located where they are most convenient for those using them.
- (8) As centralized processing at the system level develops and as more processing of library materials is purchased commercially, there will be less need for large work areas for processing at the school center. This will not eliminate the need for work space for receiving and integrating new materials into the collection, and for processing some materials at the school level, but this work space may differ in nature and in size.
- (9) As school materials specialists are more articulate about specific needs for library purposes, better equipment will be designed and made available. The school library market will continue to be one of the most attractive for industry to consider because of the vast number of school libraries developed in every community. This will encourage the development of products especially designed for school library consumption.

(10) School libraries will offer more and varied services to teachers and other staff members, including aid in locating and evaluating materials, literature searching, and help in developing techniques of teaching with the newer educational media. Special provisions of space within the library complex will make this possible, as will adequate provision of library personnel.

(11) Library schools will be more realistic in providing opportunities for pre-service school librarians to learn methods of planning educational facilities. They will encourage and support in-service opportunities for up-dating knowledge in this area and become centers for research and study of the problems in library planning identified in library practice.

(12) America's school libraries will continue to become more humanized, representing in design and in appearance the best of our cultural attainment. They will be planned to encourage children, young people and their teachers to enjoy and to use freely the library's materials and services.

Is this too much to hope for? Perhaps not, when one recognizes that now, in 1963, each of these assumptions can be found in operation in at least one school library somewhere in this country.

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