

Future Possibilities in the Development of the School Library Materials Center

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Previous papers have presented both philosophical and theoretical aspects of the changes and developments that have been taking place in the school library field. These have been supplemented with considerations given to the practical problems arising from the newer media being used in modern teaching programs and the role of the school library at all levels in servicing the needs of students and teachers who are using successfully these multi-media resources for more effective learning.

To maintain perspective while projecting one's thoughts into the possible future developments of the school library as an Instructional Materials Center is both difficult and perplexing. In a country as vast and complex as ours, where basic patterns of education vary greatly from section to section, and where each area has its own deep seated roots in the past, no single pattern of education or of school library programs emerges clearly. The fifty states have fifty patterns, and within each state there are great variations among the schools of teaching methods, of library service, of the type and amount of teaching materials made available, and of the administrative patterns for servicing book, pamphlet, periodical, audio, and visual resources in a school or in a school system. This complexity, as we know, stems from the fact that our federal constitution delegates the responsibility for educating children and youth to the states, who in turn delegate the responsibility to the citizens of each community. The people alone can decide whether they want to provide quality education with functional school facilities and adequate or superior learning resources, or, whether they want to provide for the bare necessities of teaching as required by state regulations. Leadership, or the lack of it, at the state and local level determines to a great degree what is provided for the children of a state and community. Even within a school district itself, inequalities of school plants, school facilities, teaching staff, and instructional materials may be very apparent to anyone concerned with the problem and willing to take the time to investigate.

Many writers, critics, and students of American education today paint a very gloomy picture of the products of our modern methods of teaching. By reading such accounts one can become easily

discouraged and upset. But in visiting schools throughout the United States, exciting programs of quality education attested by the records of the graduates of these schools can tell another story. Many of these schools are in communities that for years have shown leadership in educational advances. The citizens in these areas have elected school boards who have sought and brought to each community school administrators and teachers who are educators in the real sense of the word, and each community has continually supported the educational needs of the schools to keep them abreast of changing times.

Progress in any field is usually very slow. We often have to look backwards to the past to see clearly what progress has been made, for day to day changes and developments are hard to discern. But we need to stop now and look at the present and see where we are. We need to look for signs of change and of trends pointing toward the future. We need to see if we can find evidence in schools throughout the country that the philosophy, the concepts, and the programs discussed at this Allerton Institute are actualities in some of our schools today.

An extensive study for the United States Office of Education has been undertaken with money from Part B of Title VII of the National Defense Education Act to identify school libraries that function as instructional materials centers. This study does provide evidence of emerging patterns of administration and shows that resources of all types of instructional materials are a part of the school library program and are to be found at all levels of the educational ladder.

A few general facts regarding the Status Study might well be cited at this time. In order to locate elementary, junior, and senior high school libraries that do function as instructional materials centers, information was sought from each of the fifty states through the state, county, city, and town school library supervisors or from the state educational agency if there were no school library supervisors. The study was limited to school libraries identified by library supervisors as those functioning as instructional materials centers and/or to those that are in the beginning stages of such development. The supervisors were asked to star those schools which were considered to have outstanding programs of service and resources which qualified them to be designated as having school libraries which function as instructional materials centers as defined by the 1960 national standards of the American Association of School Librarians.¹ The director of the study visited as many of these school libraries as was possible with time and money available. Where there were no supervisors, it is very possible that many schools have not been identified whose library programs do fit into the limits of the study. Questionnaires were prepared to use in these schools, and some questionnaires were given to the school library supervisor to use in other schools in the system visited that had similar library programs and

resources. A few of the schools visited did not fill out the questionnaire. A total of 229 elementary schools, 88 junior high schools, and 181 senior high schools were a part of the study. These schools are located in twenty-eight states. At least one or more school libraries were located in seven out of the eight regions of the United States listed below and have resources, staff, quarters, equipment, and budget that place them in the first group of school libraries identified by the study. Complete figures will be given in the final study, and many of the tables shown as transparencies at the conference will not be included in this shortened report.

Data relating to the regional picture of library supervisors, library education, and schools participating in the Status Study can be summarized as follows:

- Region 1. New England. 6 states
 - 3 states have state library supervisors
 - 5 states have programs of library education
 - 3 states participated in the U. S. Office of Education Status Study
- Region 2. Mideast. 5 states + Washington, D. C.
 - 5 states have state library supervisors
 - 4 states and Washington, D. C. have programs of library education
 - all states participated in the study
- Region 3. Great Lakes. 5 states
 - 4 states have state library supervisors
 - all states have programs of library education
 - all states participated in the study
- Region 4. Plains States. 7 states
 - 2 states have state library supervisors
 - all states have programs of library education
 - 1 state participated in the study
- Region 5. Southeast. 12 states
 - all states have state library supervisors
 - all states have programs of library education
 - 10 states participated in the study
- Region 6. Southwest. 4 states
 - 2 states have state library supervisors
 - all states have programs of library education
 - 1 state participated in the study
- Region 7. Rocky Mountains. 5 states
 - 2 states have state library supervisors
 - all states have programs of library education
 - no state participated in the study

Region 8. Far West. 6 states

- 5 states have state library supervisors
- 5 states have programs of library education
- 3 states participated in the study

Another breakdown shows that there were twenty-six states that were identified as having 229 elementary school libraries administered as instructional materials centers. Seventy-nine of these schools were visited. These programs range from beginning stages to those school libraries having quarters, resources, equipment, and budget planned specifically for administering the library as a resources center for the school. Virginia, Florida, North Carolina, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, and Washington each have from ten to forty-five such schools identified in the study. At the junior high school level there are twenty-one states with 88 school libraries identified as instructional materials centers. Thirty-four of these libraries were visited and Maryland, Florida, and Virginia each have from thirteen to sixteen such school libraries identified. Twenty-six states have at least 181 high school libraries identified as materials centers. Florida, Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia identify from ten to nineteen such school libraries, and over 105 were visited. These findings give further evidence that the "Instructional Materials Center" concept of the school library program is being implemented in many of our schools throughout the United States.

In visiting the schools, it was possible to observe a few other trends which will be noted in fuller detail in the final study. In all of the schools of this study that might be rated as having outstanding programs of library service, it was obvious that there were school administrators who were cognizant of the role of the school library as a learning center and who were working with their school librarians to integrate the library program and its resources into the educational dynamics of the school. Excellent programs of library service with flexible scheduling, individualized learning activities, and evidence of teacher-librarian planning to make effective use of resources available were also noted in these schools. Quarters planned to make possible the use of the library during evenings, Saturday mornings, and summer vacations were found in various parts of the country. Centralized processing ranging from the cataloging of all types of resources to the cataloging of only books or only audio-visual materials was found in school systems throughout the country. Processing for all schools in the system or county was handled in only a few places. Other systems which are newly providing this service, catalog materials for elementary schools only, for new schools, or for those schools having limited library staff members. All systems with centralized processing had plans to include eventually all schools in the system. A few of the larger

centers have already set up data processing programs for central purchasing and processing and more are in the planning stages.

New schools which are being planned in states such as Florida and North Carolina all include a school library as an essential part of the elementary, junior, or senior high school plant. In Florida, particularly, the library in each school is planned as a resources center with space and facilities for group and individual reading areas, office and workroom areas, and storage space designed to care for all the many types of library resources needed in a school today. Storage for books, vertical file materials, periodicals, films, filmstrips, recordings of tapes or discs, models, charts, realia, and professional materials for teachers are included in the building plans, and approved by the state architect and school library supervisor. Storage of equipment needed for these many learning resources are also planned as an integral part of the quarters of the school. Where the various types of equipment are located will depend on the type of school plant. In a one building, one floor school, in a campus type school, in a school within a school, or in a many storied school, storage locations of equipment will vary. In some plants the library quarters are functionally planned to care for projectors, screens, etc., and in other schools these will be located in each building or in each wing where they can be used more readily. But their location and use are a part of the administration of the library. The amount and type of equipment located in a school may also depend on whether the school system has a District Instructional Materials Center to supplement the resources and equipment located in each school. School plants vary as to the provision made for radio and television studios, preview and video laboratories, dark rooms, materials production area, outdoor reading areas, and a faculty professional library. But all of these areas are found in some of the schools identified in the Status Study. In many states more and more interest is being shown by school boards, schools administrators, and librarians in planning for functional quarters to house and to administer the multi-media resources being added to the school library. From letters and floor plans received since the visits were made to these school systems, it is obvious that many more schools could be identified as instructional materials centers if the study were being started in 1964 rather than being completed in that year. The trend is in the direction of an enlarged scope of library services, of resources, and of quarters for the school library of tomorrow. It is to be hoped that staff and budget will keep pace with these resources and equipment.

More of the schools meet the AASL standards for the school library in respect to holdings of books, periodicals, professional collections, and audio-visual resources, and in respect to quarters, than is true for budget and for staff. Fewer schools meet the standards for staff members than for any other category. Yet if the library program and resources are to be expanded to take care of the needs of increased enrollments and of newer teaching methods then

more attention must be given to providing adequate staff to care for the handling of these resources and services. No other type of library provides so inadequately for staff members as does the school library, yet no library staff works harder than do most school librarians to provide adequate and superior services for patrons. Implementation of this phase of the AASL standards is almost more important than any other aspect, for with adequate staff who have good professional preparation for selecting, processing, and servicing all types of library materials, the school library program of service will move ahead at a far greater speed than is now evident in many of the schools in the country.

If the data presented thus far is an indication of future trends in school library development, then it seems fair to say that the school library of tomorrow will have many of the characteristics of a multimedia center for individual, small group, or large group learning processes. No one pattern of design is more prevalent than another but flexibility of structure, expansion of resources and services, mobility of resources and equipment, and specialized preparation of staff members are more than straws in the wind.

Implications of these developments in the school library field are highly significant for library education. The second part of the Status Study deals with the opportunities available today for library education at the undergraduate and graduate level. Only a few highlights can be cited here. Forty-seven of the fifty states offer in 351 universities either undergraduate or graduate programs of library education or both. Twenty-one states have a total of 36 accredited library schools. With ten additional states having graduate programs ranging from a major to less than a major of graduate library education, there are a total of 86 schools in 31 states and Washington, D. C. offering graduate courses in library science. Approximately 351 universities offer undergraduate library programs. Forty-nine institutions offer less than a minor, 243 offer an undergraduate minor, and 60 offer an undergraduate major. These findings have been taken from college catalogs and may not represent all the programs and especially those that are offered in the summers only. Tables in the Status Study will show where these programs are available and the emphasis given in course offerings to the selection, organization, and preparation of non-print materials as well as the traditional book and print materials offered by library school programs. If catalog descriptions are accurate, then two-thirds or 226 of the programs of library education today do take into account the need for preparing school librarians to administer a school library as a materials center. State requirements for teacher education also reflect the trend in requiring of teachers and school librarians preparation in the handling, evaluating, utilizing, and producing of audio-visual materials and equipment. Thus library education is also changing to meet these needs.

Great interest throughout the country is being shown in workshops, in in-service training programs for school librarians and teachers in the handling and utilization of audio-visual resources available today, and in institutes dealing with the total concept of the instructional materials center. These all give evidence of the need of the profession to reflect on the changes taking place very rapidly in many of our schools. In our school libraries there is a need on the part of school librarians to acquire knowledge and confidence in the securing and handling of newer resources in the audio-visual field, and in the devising of new techniques for old and new services. Library educators, library supervisors, specialists in communication and in media production and programming, curriculum coordinators, and school administrators all need to work to build understanding of the educational needs of our schools today, of the psychology of learning in relation to reading and the newer media of communication and of the expanded role of the school library as a resource center for reading, learning, information, and research. Along with this must go recruitment, research, new experiments, new certification requirements, and experimental programs in the preparation of personnel for the instructional materials center.

The future holds promise for change. The past has proven that school libraries are capable of making changes. This has been shown by the leadership of the schools that have continued to point the way ahead to meet the needs of the institutions they serve. Library education has likewise never been static and is now again in the process of developing programs to meet the challenges of the future. These changes are not to be found in all school libraries nor in all library schools. But interest on the part of the profession is growing, and demands and changes in society itself will be reflected in the changes seen in the schools and library schools of tomorrow. Not only will school libraries at all levels function as instructional materials centers, but district and regional centers will also increase in number to supplement and to enrich the resources and services now available. Leadership, experiments, and research are all needed, and ways must be found to secure public understanding and financial support for a program that helps to bring quality education within the reach of every child and helps to provide for his individual need and capabilities.

REFERENCES

1. American Association of School Librarians. Standards for School Library Programs. Chicago, American Library Association, 1960.