Introduction

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IN PLANNING the third issue of *Library Trends* an effort has been made to concentrate attention upon certain influences which are at work in the school library field. They affect the shaping, developing, and hindering of the modern school library program, the administrative phases of the school library, the types of library services that have evolved in the elementary or secondary school, the research carried on in the field, and methods of evaluating the progress of school libraries in the United States and in England. The selection of materials for children and young people and its developmental effect upon behavioral patterns of youth have, for the most part, been omitted. These important aspects of the subject deserve separate and full treatment in the future.

Approximately ten years have elapsed since a comprehensive review [1] of the developments in school libraries in the United States was published. The article by Stott in the present number of *Library Trends* provides the first survey of the rise and present status of school libraries in Great Britain, and points up sharp contrasts as well as similarities in philosophy and in services as they have developed here and abroad.

Unlike the university or even the public library, the school library has arisen very recently as a social and educational institution in our culture, as becomes clear when one searches for tendencies. The literature is limited, and the same reports serve as tangents for divergent discussions. The date of 1920 stands out as the turning point in school library history, for that is the year in which the need for school libraries reached national recognition. Thus the modern school library has a tradition of only thirty odd years behind it. In this period its growth has been phenomenal in some respects, and sporadic and spotty in others. No uniform pattern of administration, service, train-

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ing, or progress emerges as the records and the research are reviewed. Moreover, so much time and energy have been devoted to devising and fitting school library service to meet child needs that little effort has been available to carry on research. This is needed, to insure that the programs planned are the ones that should be put into operation.

It is interesting to note, in reading this issue of *Library Trends,* a shifting of attention from what has been accomplished to emphasis upon the various unsolved problems. While a great deal has appeared in library journals about progress achieved, little concrete and specific evidence is available to show that much of what has been preached for over ten years has been put into practice.

Another interesting observation on the accompanying review, as presented by Henne, Batchelder, LeFevre, Anderson, and Morton, is the role of the public library and its paradoxical influence in first furthering and then retarding school library development. In contrast, there has been a lack of public library influence in the development of school libraries in Great Britain, but Stott shows that in that country the impact of a traditional educational pattern and philosophy has retarded the school library program. Both there and in the United States leadership in the school library field today seems to be coming from within the ranks of the school library profession. Growing pains, however, are evident in the jockeying for professional prestige and recognition, and also in the lack of evidence to prove or disprove the superiority of either public libraries or schools in providing the library services needed by the youth of a nation. Various patterns, rather than one, seem to emerge as necessary at this time.

The influence of national, regional, and state standards and evaluating instruments in retarding and furthering the school library movement is pointed out in various articles in this issue. Almost every writer refers in some way to their effect in crystallizing the philosophy of the school library, in changing the concepts of service, or in shaping the trends in the preparation of school librarians. The same influence is revealed in Great Britain, as directives are issued by the Ministry of Education concerning plans and training for school libraries. One also observes in reading the articles of Henne, Batchelder, Anderson, Douglas, Ersted, and Morton that forces outside the library, as well as outside the school, are affecting the character of school library service and school library personnel. Several of the writers make clear that size of school and the level of the educational ladder—elementary, junior high, or senior high school—are no longer considered important

in determining school library policies, in governing the preparation necessary for a school librarian, in fixing the amount of time a librarian devotes to a library, nor in indicating the physical features of the school library.

An adequate and effective program of library service for every boy and girl in the United States is the keynote voiced in the writings of today. This is pointed up by Batchelder, Nickel, James, Anderson, Ersted, Douglas, and Hayes. Undoubtedly we have come a long way in our thinking and may take pride in our progress. Just as unquestionably the facts and figures, as well as the research analyzed by Fedder and the realistic appraisal of practices presented by Henne, bring us up short. Some weaknesses are evident, and more would be if there were enough data to picture completely the status of school libraries today in this country and abroad. Great and apparent as the need for adequate school libraries seems to some librarians, administrators, and educators, it is not understood or appreciated by many more educators, teachers, administrators, and lay persons. Sad to say, even some librarians fail to grasp it.

Extremes come to light in a summary of trends. We see progress at some points, and little or none at others. Programs here and there are effective, and elsewhere non-existent. Sometimes new buildings are planned and constructed with all the modern ideas of a functional school library program incorporated, and again there is no provision at all either for a central library or for classroom libraries. Such extremes offer challenges, and leave no room for complacency. The negative side of the ledger includes, specifically, lack of personnel trained to develop a library program at any level of education; want of sufficient elementary school libraries; absence of cooperation in planning functional quarters; and lack of coordination as between the training programs at the undergraduate level in teacher-training institutions and the graduate programs in the library schools. These are only a few of the apparent shortcomings existing today.

On the other hand qualitative standards gradually are replacing quantitative ones; research studies are providing clues for the planning of adequate programs of training; school library leadership is emerging in state departments of education; in a few cases functional quarters are being arranged to satisfy users' needs; sometimes the activities of libraries at the elementary and secondary level are such as to accord with the requirements, abilities, and interests of individual children; and library service is beginning to be expressed in terms of

social, reading, and vocational guidance and as part of the teaching functions of the school library. These gains show the advances of the last decade or so. Research or lack of research will determine the road ahead. With the issues clear and the developments known, new steps toward a more adequate program of school library service should be possible.

References

1. National Society for the Study of Education: *Forty-second Yearbook, Part II; The Library in General Education*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1943.