



School Libraries in City School Systems

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THE SCHOOL LIBRARY as an integral part of the modern school is such a well-accepted fact today that the beginnings of school library service in our country are looked back upon with a degree of awe that so much has been accomplished in such a brief span of time. Then as one reviews current surveys and statistical studies, he recognizes the limitations of this program and is somewhat overwhelmed at the tremendous needs still to be met if quality education is to be brought to all students. For "education in a democracy requires the resources and services of school libraries; the philosophy of democracy maintains the right of every boy and girl to have these resources and services."¹

According to a statistical report of the United States Office of Education in 1953-54,² about 47 per cent of the schools in the United States received service from classroom collections only; about 37 per cent had centralized libraries; and 11 per cent of the schools in the United States received service designated as "any other type of library service." Five per cent of all schools reported no library service.

The greatest lag was at the elementary level. Seventy-five per cent of the elementary schools were without school libraries in 1953-54, although most city schools had some type of book service through classroom collections. However, these were not the equivalent of school libraries with a varied and adequate book collection and the educational services of a school librarian.

A recent statistical survey by the Library Services Branch of the Office of Education entitled *Public School Library Statistics, 1958-59*,³ revealed that only about 50 per cent of the 82,222 schools studied had libraries. Of approximately 34 million public school pupils included in the survey, more than 10 million attended schools without libraries. Sixty-six per cent of the elementary schools, about 60,000

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schools, did not have libraries. Although only 3 per cent of the secondary schools were without libraries, many of the libraries were inadequate with regard to staff, quarters, collections of materials, and financial support.

Enrollment in kindergarten and elementary schools increased by 11 million during the 1950's. According to statistical studies of population growth,⁴ the pressure in the grade schools will be much less during the sixties and seventies but it will not disappear. Between 1960 and 1980, enrollment may be increased by over 9 million or by 29 per cent over two decades by contrast with more than 50 per cent over one decade in the fifties. During the 50's, high school enrollment increased by about 54 per cent, roughly about the same rate as the rise in grade school enrollment. But while the pressure on grade schools will decline in the sixties, that on high schools will continue unabated. Between 1950-1979 the 14 to 17 year olds (potential high school students) will nearly double in number. By 1980 this group will amount to over 18 million. The explosion of population which has challenged educators in the past decade will bring increasing problems in the years to come. Building programs for new schools, including school libraries, personnel, and materials, will continue to be major issues.

In accordance with statistical studies and projections, over three-fourths of the increase in public school enrollment will be concentrated in fewer than 200 metropolitan areas.⁵ The great increase in the size of metropolitan school systems will create problems of organization, facilities, finance, staff administration, and problems of adapting programs to meet new needs. "Metropolitan areas will be the new frontier in educational administration; decentralization of administration will become increasingly common in very large school systems."⁵

Transportation problems in congested city areas require that libraries and instructional materials be available within the school. Library services in schools will have to expand if we are to reach the goals in quality library service.

Our society has changed vastly in this century, in regard to both technological developments, and social and cultural organization. A new emphasis upon learning, a desire for knowledge, and the recognition of the utilitarian value of research are bringing an increased incentive in to the use of library resources. Our expanding, changing world has brought about new and significant educational trends, new methods, and new philosophies. Changes in concepts and purposes

have come about in the effort to pursue the knowledge and understanding necessary to living in today's world and in that of tomorrow. Learning has become important; study and research are universal. Knowledge must be current and worldwide. Even the moon, formerly the special interest of astronomers and the poets, has taken on political significance. The children of today will be participants in the space developments of the future.

The many changes in our 20th-century living and the rapid growth of population have challenged educators to renewed efforts to explore ways to make learning and instruction more effective. They have turned to the new media of instruction. Motion pictures and closed circuit television are meeting the needs for mass instruction by teacher specialists. More recently, teaching machines and programs are being developed which provide for individualized instruction at the student's own rate of speed and ability. Simple as well as complex subjects are being programmed by expert teachers with the claim for an unusual degree of success on the part of the student. Language laboratories are being widely established, bringing individualized programs of foreign language instruction and conversational drill direct to the student through electronic devices. The audio-lingual method claims to help students acquire a "near native" pronunciation of a foreign language. These new devices together with filmstrips, slides, tapes, recordings, and radio have added interest and given impetus to learning as they supplement the traditional printed material in libraries.

These new teaching methods have implications for the school library. Team teaching is being used as a device to direct student learning through lecture, demonstration, and discussion by the best qualified teachers. Other members of the team serve as teacher aides or clerical assistants to relieve the teacher specialist of many routine and clerical duties. Team teaching with variable scheduling and the use of electronic devices releases teacher time for planning and study in the library. The student, under the variable scheduling, is free to explore on his own and will turn to the library and the librarian for guidance and encouragement in his efforts at independent study and research. Directions will be personally adjusted in accordance with the ability and experience of the student.

Modern educational methods call for the use of many books, still the most inexpensive and adaptable tools of learning. If the current challenge of accelerated education is to be met, schools must provide

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through libraries the variety of titles needed to encourage wide reading and research, to develop reflective thinking and independent judgment, and to deepen understandings. No longer can the school library be considered a luxury, for it has become an integral part of the educational program in the school. The librarian's responsibility is to expose young people to the best in literature during their school years, to assist them to capture the magic of the written word, to stimulate their imagination and natural curiosity, and to provide the materials and the skills for independent study and research.

For accomplishment of the goals now set for modern education, a full program of library services is essential in all schools, elementary and secondary, small and large, rural and urban, public and private. Separate classroom collections are neither economical nor adequate to meet the wide variety of reading levels and interests in each class; a library outside the school can provide services but not a program. For, to quote from *Standards for School Library Programs*,⁶ "The true concept of a school library program means instruction, service and activity throughout the school." The library must contribute to the guidance program, to the program for exceptional children, to the advanced placement program; to a program that encompasses reading guidance for all levels of ability, instruction in the use of the library, reference, and research techniques; a program that touches all aspects of the curriculum, each classroom, every student and teacher; a program geared to the abilities, needs, and interests of all.

The quality of the library is one of the determining factors in the quality of any school. There must be an adequate and well-trained staff, functional physical quarters and equipment, a wide variety of printed and audio-visual materials, and the necessary financial resources. The active support of librarians, school administrators and teachers, boards of education, parents and other lay persons is needed to develop successful school library programs.

Although good teaching and learning programs require the resources and services of good school libraries, the inequality of services was revealed in a statistical study conducted by the Library Services Branch.³ The evidence contained in this study showed the marked differences between actual conditions and the national standards published in 1960 by the American Library Association in *Standards for School Library Programs*.⁶ The new standards state: "All schools having two hundred or more students need well-organized school libraries with functional programs of service directed by

qualified personnel." We have already noted the lack of libraries in 50 per cent of the schools studied.

In *Standards for School Library Programs*,⁶ today's library is described as the instructional materials or learning resource center of the school, where audio-visual materials are also housed or made easily available. One reading room is not enough in large schools. In addition, the library area should include conference space, listening and viewing space, space for a teachers' professional library, space for the storage and production of materials, for library instruction, for individual study, for displays and exhibits. Fluid classroom collections must be provided.

How will the school plant of the future and more specifically the school library meet the challenges of the new instructional media, teaching methods, and ever-changing curriculum? Architects predict significant changes in school design. Our future schools must be planned with adequate space to serve almost overwhelming numbers of students and to function throughout the year and possibly 12 hours a day. Twice as many schools will be needed in the fast-mushrooming metropolitan areas, as space is diminishing with costs rising. Will we build skyscraper schools and underground classrooms, all a part of an apartment dwelling as one architect has suggested? Transportation problems would be simplified. Pupils would step out of their homes into elevators which would deliver them direct to their classrooms below.

Another architect describes the big-city school as the "Tower School of Tomorrow," an eleven story tower with a windowless lecture room, a smaller seminar room, and a number of compact individual cubicles, each enclosed on three sides, and equipped with the latest technological devices. He calls it a space saver and an economic necessity as land and building costs skyrocket in big cities. Other architects suggest a "school in the round" which requires less building material, less corridor space and more outside glass; or a windowless school with artificial lighting and mechanical ventilation, movable rooms made up of modular sections. Experiments are going forward with circular libraries as the hub of the school plant. Libraries with high windows above wall stacks are proving economical of space. Some architects recommend the cluster or satellite construction which breaks rooms into smaller units. Schools constructed today must have a "built in" flexibility for tomorrow: for example, each room easily darkened for visual aids, reversible chalk boards, an intercommunication system

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in each room, and portable walls to provide for smaller or larger groupings.

Whatever the outward physical plant, it is today generally recognized by educators and librarians that library plans must provide for individual study and the use of resources; they must be larger; conference rooms for group discussion and class instruction must adjoin the general reading room. There should be flexible partitions providing for many small groups or expanding for full classes, cubicles for individual study, listening posts for independent use of tapes and recordings, areas for viewers and teaching machines, new planning for the storage of microfilm and records, and work rooms for teachers.

The librarian will be a specialist with professional training in the organization and use of instructional materials of all kinds. He will work with teachers, administrators, and supervisors as a consultant in the evaluation, selection, and use of materials. He will provide leadership within the total instructional program and be a member of the administrative staff. He will instruct teachers as well as students in the resources of the library and prepare film strips and skill programs and tests for teaching machines. He will have technological knowledge and skill in the use of automation for ordering, cataloging, and distribution of materials.

Not only will the librarian be a member of the teaching team, he will also be a part of the library team, for more than one librarian will be necessary to carry on the myriad activities of a functioning modern library. As schools in cities reach an enrollment of several thousand, there will be a need for many librarians, as well as for clerical assistants, teacher aids, and technicians for supervising the machines housed in the library. The head librarian will coordinate the library program in the school, working directly with the administration, department heads, curriculum supervisors, and community agencies. Duties related to reference and bibliography, instruction of students and teachers, and reading guidance will be assigned to professional assistants.

When the school library of the future is open longer hours, possibly the year around, and as services are increased, more personnel will be required. With the expanding need for manpower in libraries must come an awareness of the need to recruit a steady flow of competent young people into the profession. The rewards of working in a field of service and personal growth should be suggested to promising student assistants, and the availability of scholarships should be

called to their attention. Library education should provide courses for those specializing in school librarianship with more emphasis upon supervision and administration.

Much needs to be done in directing teachers in the knowledge and use of materials. A study of *The Secondary School Teacher and Library Services* made by the N.E.A. in 1958⁷ found that only 13.1 per cent of 1,448 teachers who participated in the survey had received instruction in the role and function of the school library as a definite part of their professional training. Principals and teachers have personally expressed their interest and have recognized the need for improved methods and training in the use of library resources. Every librarian should be dedicated to the task of improving instruction in his school. Courses must be established in teacher training institutions and librarians must hold city-wide workshops on library resources and their use.

This kind of training is basic to solving some of the important problems in student use of the public library. Pressures on both school and public libraries continue to mount. These will not diminish, but as teachers are directed into the more efficient use of library resources and in turn direct their students, the work load will be lightened. In addition to pre-service training courses, each librarian must assume a responsibility for establishing better communication between schools and public libraries. Through planned conferences, workshops and institutes, teachers can be made aware of good library techniques and available materials, and in turn public librarians can be informed about the curriculum in the schools. This use of libraries which has been given emphasis under the pursuit of excellence in education should not be discouraged, but this interest and enthusiasm should be directed for the greatest good of all.

In 1960 the publication of *Standards for School Library Programs*⁶ was a distinguished service to school librarians and administrators and a timely aid to the accelerated educational program. With the publication of this document has come a new challenge and a renewed interest in providing better education through strengthening the library services of the school. It sets forth a long term plan for school libraries and establishes qualitative and quantitative criteria. A basic tenet of the philosophy of the standards is that the most important part of the library program is the work with students and teachers, those activities and services that make the library an educational force in the school: "The objectives of very good schools require that the

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library program be in full operation, which can be done only when the school meets standards for the personnel, materials, funds, and quarters of the school library.”⁶ School librarians are indeed fortunate to have this guide to future implementation of good school library programs. The support of boards of education and administrators in financing such programs is essential to their continued success.

Education has a tremendous task today to train youth to assume their responsibilities in an ever-changing world. School librarians have a share in this endeavor. With the guiding principles set forth in the A.A.S.L. publication, *Standards for School Library Programs*,⁶ and with an aggressive plan for their implementation, librarians may hope to contribute to the success of this educational challenge and carry out the ideal expressed at the White House Conference: “America’s determination to help children and youth realize their full potential for a creative life in freedom and dignity.”

In a democracy, the development of the individual to his full potential is the right of each person. As stated in The Report of the President’s Commission on National Goals, November 1960, “The paramount goal of the United States was set long ago. It is to guard the rights of the individual, to ensure his development, and to enlarge his opportunity. It is set forth in the Declaration of Independence.”⁸

One of the most challenging tasks in education today is that of the school librarian whose responsibility it is to provide the materials of learning and a program of service which will fully develop the potential talents of each and every student and provide the materials of instruction required in the modern educational program.

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