



# Background and Development of the Junior College Library

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THE EXPLOSION of junior colleges upon the educational scene has produced a fragmented philosophy in junior college libraries. A typical librarian in a junior college cannot decide whether to be a pragmatist officially (although most are in fact) or to be an instrumentalist and change philosophies as each junior college goes its own individual way. Usually librarians are too occupied to give much thought to it, since many are kept busy just keeping up with the mushrooming expansion of junior colleges.

In the scholarly journals of today, in the popular magazines, and in the state legislatures, the big discovery of the age of education for all Americans is the junior college. Many tend to think that junior colleges arose at this time and in this place to solve the educational gap of the nation. In point of fact, they have been with us for over half-a-century. And America can honestly say that the junior college is “. . . the only educational institution which can be truly stamped ‘Made in the United States of America.’”<sup>1</sup>

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, some visionary educators discussed the establishment of this type of institution. They experimented intellectually with the idea of the German *gymnasium*, which would extend the high schools to the thirteenth and fourteenth grades, after which a student could embark on university work.<sup>2</sup>

This theory was known in early circles as “university amputation.”<sup>3</sup> The reasoning was that it was better for universities to concentrate only upon higher academic work and raise accordingly their courses, standards, and requirements. Although some systems did this, it was not overwhelmingly accepted since the consensus has been that any four-year college wants to stay a four-year college, or even become a university. The next idea to appear was “high school elongation.”<sup>3</sup>

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This developed from the fact that many students were losing the chance for higher education through distance or lack of money, and that the added two years would at least give them an opportunity to pursue studies. This idea caught on quite readily. Many towns wanted to offer more advanced education, use the high school facilities, and academically advance their citizens. Today there are still many junior colleges combined with high schools as an elongation of their program.

The third concept was "college decapitation."<sup>3</sup> This was a beautiful theory but did not work well in practice. The premise was to cut off the junior and senior years in weak four-year colleges and thereby create strong two-year colleges. Since most four-year colleges want to remain four-year colleges, the idea was never cheerfully accepted by those involved, and little was done to carry out this thesis.

The final and latest idea was the "independent creation,"<sup>3</sup> which was envisioned as a two-year college, separate from a high school or a senior college, arising on its own and becoming a unique educational institution. Community colleges were derived from this concept.

In 1964, these ideas were updated into the following questions: "Shall the American university have its legs cut off? Shall the American four-year high school be stretched? Shall certain colleges have their heads cut off?"<sup>4</sup> Because so many junior colleges had already been created independently, or were in the process of being created, there was really no need to discuss the question, and the independent creation theory was not explored.

All things must have their beginnings, however, and this "Made-in-America" college invention actually began in 1892. William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, is now known as the ". . . father of the junior college."<sup>5</sup> He grasped the idea, decided it had merit, and divided his college into two schools of two years each. The lower two years were the "Academic College," and the upper two were the "University College."<sup>5</sup> However, since the names were pretentious and since in that day there were college-jargon specialists in the academic halls, the term "junior college" came into usage in 1896 at Chicago, and has been used there and elsewhere from that time.<sup>5</sup>

This junior college of that era as today offered an Associate of Arts degree. Rainey so systematically developed the program that some of his best ideas are still in practice. Under his leadership a public junior college was set up in Joliet, Illinois, and, according to the literature,

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"Joliet Junior College, established in 1902, is now the oldest public junior college in America."<sup>6</sup>

The question might well be asked, what exactly is a junior college and what factors caused it to grow? In 1926, Monroe's *A Cyclopedia of Education* stated it this way:

JUNIOR COLLEGE.—A term used by the University of Chicago, the University of California, and a few other institutions of higher learning to designate that part of the four-years' college course embraced in the freshman and sophomore years . . . to make a separation between what is pure college work and what is the beginning of university work. . . .<sup>7</sup>

The original meaning of junior college given by Monroe remains, but it has since had various facets evolve from the core of its idea. Today the junior college may encompass a variety of objectives, and the Associate in Arts degree may mean many things to many people. It may take the place of the first two years of college work, termed "two-year" or "transitional" and heavily laced with liberal arts and general education. It may be a "terminal," or a "vocational training" college, which can give people the education for jobs that a high school degree would not afford them. Or it may be in the "community" concept, sometimes known as "open-door," which in a given area enrolls free-of-charge those students of scholastic ability, and in addition provides continuing education and culture for community citizens between the ages of eighteen and eighty. This concept updates people in their jobs and accommodates elderly people who enjoy learning in their old age, or those who simply like to go to school and take advantage of its cultural and academic atmosphere. To summarize, the programs of junior colleges may be divided into three categories: (1) transfer, (2) occupational, and (3) continuing education for adults.<sup>8</sup>

The changes in American life which led to the burgeoning of junior colleges have been summed up by Michael Brick in *Forum and Focus for the Junior College Movement*:

From the struggles to achieve equality of opportunity and to broaden the scope of higher education, the junior college idea was born. The idea took root in the soil of America's cultural, economic, and political heritage. It fed and grew on such concepts as equal opportunity for all and the desire to eliminate financial, geographical, and social barriers to higher education.<sup>9</sup> . . . Four basic social and economic

forces led to the junior college idea: (1) equality of opportunity, (2) use of education to achieve social mobility, (3) technological progress, and (4) acceptance of the concept that education is the producer of social capital.<sup>10</sup>

One could even go so far as to draw an analogy between the land grant colleges and the junior colleges: the land grant colleges came into being to develop the physical resources of our country. The junior college has come into being to develop our people.

The philosophy of junior colleges is a many-tined premise. Since they now encompass, as nearly as possible, education for all, some try to be all things to all men. The two-year parallel, the adult education, the terminal, and the technological-vocational types all, to some degree, travel different paths. Although their aims are different, their bedrock basic program is generally the same. From being an institution that only educated for the first two college years with the lofty expectation of sending all of its students on to higher degrees and better lives, the junior college has now taken upon itself the following jobs:

1. The junior college is assuming sharply increased responsibility for preparing students for upper division work at universities and other senior institutions.

2. The junior college is assuming major responsibility for technical-vocational education.

3. The junior college as an essential part of its program provides general education.

4. The junior college emphasizes the education of adults.

5. The junior college is an "open-door" college.

6. Guidance is recognized as an important responsibility and, some would assert, goal of the junior college.

7. . . . [the] aim [is] to locate junior colleges within commuting distance of all students.

8. The junior college is a community college.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, with an educational institution that branches off in all directions, what happens to its library? It is a sad but true statement that there is little in the literature concerning junior college libraries. Although reams of material are available on junior colleges, their libraries usually go unheralded and even unmentioned.

Until a definitive work clarifies the subject, it will have to be assumed that the junior college library has more or less followed the pattern of the institution it inhabits. It has robustly prospered or anemically survived according to the school it serves.

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Sparse and meager as the literature may be on the history of the junior college library, some light is thrown on the subject by Eells, who in 1931 said in *The Junior College*:

The junior college library has not received the recognition and emphasis that it merits in most of the institutions of the country. Standards have been low, actuality has been lower, facilities have been inadequate, administrators have slighted it when budgets were made, and investigators have usually ignored it in published studies.<sup>12</sup>

This is still true of the literature today. As late as 1958, Morrison and Martorana in their surveys of junior colleges said:

The area found to be most neglected was that of the junior college library. This is an observation which merits special notice by interested persons in view of the contention often heard that the junior college library has an especially important function to perform in relation to the total role of the college's community services.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, there was and is virgin territory to explore in research on junior college libraries.

As for the standards of junior college libraries in past years, Eells said that ". . . the library should be the heart of the institution . . ." <sup>14</sup> and E. B. Ratcliffe said that "a college should have a live, well-distributed, professionally administered library of at least 8000 [depending on the accrediting area] volumes, exclusive of public documents. . . ." <sup>15</sup> Eells also reported that during 1928-29, as reported by fourteen out of sixteen junior colleges in Texas, the amount spent on the purchase of books varied from \$250 to \$5152, the latter figure representing the initial purchase for a new institution at San Angelo. The median figure was \$500. The average number of volumes in these libraries was 2873. . . . Only one library was open in the evenings and that was only one night per week.<sup>16</sup>

Contrast that with the 1960 *ALA Standards for Junior College Libraries*. While the idea that the library is the "heart" of the school is not definitely stated, it is implied and is undoubtedly part of the creed of most junior college librarians. It adds, "it must have a rich and up-to-date collection of books, periodicals, recordings, and other educational materials necessary for inspiring teaching."<sup>17</sup> For a two-year institution of up to 1,000 students (full-time equivalent), it recommends a goal of 20,000 <sup>18</sup> volumes with an annual budget of five per cent of the total educational and general budget.<sup>19</sup> This is a far cry from the \$500 mean in years gone by. And to contrast even

further, most libraries are closed only one night a week and are open the other six.

Things have changed on the junior college scene. From an almost misbegotten brain child, the institution and its library have evolved into full-fledged adolescence. As junior colleges and their libraries become adult, a philosophy is needed. It is in this area that the literature is bare. One can find discussions of automated libraries, reference services, administration, planning, book selection, and learning materials centers. But the papers on library philosophy leave the indexes starkly white with few listings. Supposedly as the college went, so went the library, or in rare cases vice versa. This, in turn, left the librarian with no firm operating system to follow, with no point of departure other than running a library in the usual way that a library functions.

Wise was the observation by a junior college librarian: "Junior-college librarians seem to be in a kind of class to themselves. They are "'twixt an' 'tweens. . . ." <sup>20</sup>

And they are. Junior college librarians are neither high school nor senior college—they are in between. Junior colleges are breaking out like measles all over the country; they now number over 700.<sup>21</sup> And with one out of every four students who enter college entering junior colleges (they now enroll over 800,000,<sup>22</sup> and the prediction for the future is still greater), it is perhaps time for the junior college librarian to adopt a philosophy to serve as a buttress in any type of junior college library, two-year parallel, terminal, vocational, church-related, community, private, or any of the terms yet to be invented. The job is too big to be dismissed with the conclusion: "Well, we're transitional and we'll operate this way until something better comes along."

After thought, reading, research, and personal experience in the problem of being a junior college librarian, it is believed that this type of library can only be preparatory—not high school preparatory, but certainly not on a senior college or research level. After all, with the emphasis on the guidance of students into the proper college and career, with the responsibility for preparing terminal students with continuing self-education through library use, with the task of providing stimulating library materials for elder citizens (and the general community as well) and preparing them for learned leisure—the true job of the junior college librarian is preparation.

Therefore, from extensive research arises a proposal for a new philosophy for junior college libraries, for these "made-in-America" edu-

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cational institutions a "made-in-America" philosophy—"preparation through reading" or "paralegism." This is derived from the Latin *parare* (to prepare) plus *legundo* (reading). It is possible that this philosophy may define the role of junior college libraries and the varied types of institutions they serve.

The years will pass, and the debate will continue as to the role of junior colleges on the American educational scene. No one can accurately foretell how large the junior college complex will grow in the coming years—all that is known is that it will grow. No one can foretell how the educational conflict as to what a junior college actually is will end; all that is known is that the outcome will result in better education. And as junior colleges grow, and the educational product improves, much will depend on the libraries of each separate and unique institution. The trend at present seems to be toward community colleges, and it is a trend that shows no signs of abating. Undoubtedly the church-related, the private, and the independent junior colleges will have their roles—but the community college appears dominant in this segment of American education.

Edwin J. Gleazer, Jr., executive director of the American Association of Junior Colleges, has said:

I am sure of this much: Junior colleges will be called up to carry a large responsibility in meeting the higher education needs of our nation in the years ahead. This genuine American invention, the junior college, is uniquely suited for this responsibility and it may be relied upon to do its part.<sup>23</sup>

Through the use of "paralegism"—preparation through reading—the junior college libraries may be relied upon to help the junior colleges close America's educational gap.

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