



Junior College Library Processing

JAMES W. PIRIE

A SURVEY of the processing activities of junior college libraries is reminiscent of the labors of Sisyphus. No matter where or however intensively one's efforts have been directed at recording the myriad practices and procedures of scores of libraries, the investigator sees questions imperfectly phrased, understood, and answered. The simple truth is that methods of processing in a more or less homogeneous group of libraries are so bewildering in their variety and ingenious in their meeting of problems in different ways that any attempt to capture a true picture of them on paper produces results that must be approached cautiously.

The libraries of junior colleges vary enormously in size and in scope. As service agencies of their colleges, they reflect to a substantial degree the philosophy and conditions of the institutions they serve. As the junior colleges themselves differ in great degree, and in these turbulent years are constantly changing in objectives and organization, so their libraries are also changing. Junior college libraries are different now from what they were ten years ago: larger, more completely oriented to the college field, and more in tune with current professional thought. The next ten years will without doubt see similar changes.

This review of the technical service activities characteristic of junior college libraries is based principally on a survey conducted in the winter of 1962-63, although a substantial use is made of results shown by Arthur Ray Rowland in his article on "Cataloging and Classification in Junior College Libraries."¹

Any survey is suspect, and that generalization is no less true for this one. The response, even should it go as high as 50 to 60 per cent, is no guarantee that a representative quality has been achieved. There is a strong suspicion that this one has been skewed or distorted by the

James W. Pirie is Librarian of the Charles Stewart Mott Library, which serves the Flint Community Junior College and Flint College of the University of Michigan.

Junior College Library Processing

fact that relatively more medium-sized and large libraries answered the questionnaire than did small ones. We can only speculate as to the reasons for this.

Possibly one reason is that the smaller libraries do not as often have the sophistication of adequate records. In certain cases it was apparent from a few responses that some of those in charge of junior college libraries did not recognize terms of common parlance among librarians. It is perfectly easy to visualize some consigning a questionnaire to the wastepaper basket rather than struggling over four pages of technical queries. Finally—and this is offered in all humility—it may be that in a time such as ours, which equates size with virtue, the keeper of a small library may simply not want to record the sad details, even though he is doing a fine job with few resources.

However untrustworthy the method, the questionnaire was sent to 216 junior college libraries drawn from the *Educational Directory, 1961-1962*.² Replies were received from 145, or 67 per cent, of which ten were unusable. Tabulations were then based upon 135 replies, constituting 62.4 per cent of the total, representing thirty-five states in the continental United States.

The size of their book collections is shown in Table 1, and varied from a low of 1,250 to a giant of 98,500 items. The mean of this group is 21,700 volumes, with a median of 18,000; over 59 per cent of the libraries have resources under 20,000 items—including books, bound

TABLE 1
Size of Book Collection of 135 Junior College Libraries

<i>Number of Books</i>	<i>Number of Libraries</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
0 - 4,999	6	04.5
5,000 - 9,999	19	14.1
10,000 - 14,999	25	18.5
15,000 - 19,999	30	22.2
20,000 - 24,999	19	14.1
25,000 - 29,999	11	08.2
30,000 - 34,999	9	06.7
35,000 - 39,999	6	04.5
40,000 - 44,999	3	02.2
45,000 - 49,999	2	01.3
50,000 - 84,999	0	00.0
85,000 - 89,999	4	03.0
90,000 - 94,999	0	00.0
95,000 - 100,000	1	00.7
Total	135	100%

JAMES W. PIRIE

periodicals, microforms, pamphlets, and recordings, but not counting audio-visual material such as films and filmstrips.

Annual expenditures for library resources ran the gamut from \$200 to \$58,472 (see Table 2). The mean for expenditures is \$11,200, with a median of \$9,650. Since well over 50 per cent spent less than \$10,000, this group is shown in greater detail, in Table 3.

TABLE 2
Annual Expenditures of 135 Junior College Libraries

<i>Expenditures</i>	<i>Number of Libraries</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
\$ 0 - 4,999	39	28.9
5,000 - 9,999	31	23.0
10,000 - 14,999	30	22.2
15,000 - 19,999	20	14.9
20,000 - 24,999	6	04.5
25,000 - 29,999	5	03.7
30,000 - 34,999	0	00.0
35,000 - 39,999	1	00.7
40,000 - 44,999	1	00.7
45,000 - 49,999	0	00.0
50,000 - 54,999	1	00.7
55,000 - 60,000	1	00.7
Total	135	100%

TABLE 3
Annual Expenditures of 70 Junior College Libraries with Less than \$10,000 Annual Expenditures Each

<i>Expenditures</i>	<i>Number of Libraries</i>
\$ 0 - 999	2
1,000 - 1,999	4
2,000 - 2,999	7
3,000 - 3,999	15
4,000 - 4,999	11
5,000 - 5,999	6
6,000 - 6,999	6
7,000 - 7,999	9
8,000 - 8,999	6
9,000 - 9,999	4
Total	70

In resources added to the libraries' working collections, an average of just over 1,100 items was found (see Table 4). The mean figure is 1,120, and the median is 965.

Junior College Library Processing

TABLE 4

Number of Books Added in 1962 by 135 Junior College Libraries

<i>Number of Books Added</i>	<i>Number of Libraries</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
0 - 999	37	27.4
1,000 - 1,999	36	26.7
2,000 - 2,999	29	21.6
3,000 - 3,999	16	11.9
4,000 - 4,999	9	06.7
5,000 - 5,999	2	01.3
6,000 - 6,999	4	03.0
7,000 - 7,999	1	00.7
8,000 - 16,999	0	00.0
17,000 - 18,000	1	00.7
Total	135	100%

Almost all libraries performed processing services, including ordering, cataloging, and bindery preparation. The extent varied with the service performed. The preparation of orders, which includes searching in the catalog and order files, and clarification of bibliographic details such as edition, publisher, and price, was performed by 129 of the libraries replying to this question. Four libraries did not do so. The dispatch of orders to suppliers, on the other hand, was left to other agencies to a large degree. Fifty-one libraries sent off their own orders, while eighty-two forwarded their book orders to other hands (48 or 59 per cent by the college business or purchasing office, 30 or 37 per cent by the board of education business or purchasing office, and 4 or 5 per cent by other libraries or other agencies). Even the college president had a hand in the dispatch of orders in one case. One would think that a president might occupy himself in a more fruitful fashion than acting as a way station for book orders.

The reason a large majority of the junior college libraries participating in the survey did not place their orders directly with the suppliers is probably because many junior colleges have their financial and administrative bases in boards of education. The boards, by legal interpretation of their responsibilities for public funds, or by inclination, are reluctant to allow the commitment of money by any except the duly authorized business office. Some libraries in similar situations have persuaded their boards that they may be designated as agencies of the business or purchasing office and may send out book orders directly to publishers, agents, and bookdealers.

Another factor that should be mentioned is that many libraries do

not have the staff to control adequately expenditures by accounting methods. Answers to the survey question relating to accounting of book funds showed that most libraries did not have the primary responsibility in accounting for book funds; 39 libraries (29 per cent) handled their own accounts, 60 (45 per cent) had their financial accounts handled by the college business office, 29 (21 per cent) by the board of education business office, and 7 (5 per cent) by other agencies, e.g., state auditors, county purchasing office, and district business office. There appeared to be a considerable overlap in accounting, in that the parent organization kept the official books while the library kept an informal tally of expenditures against the subject allocations of the book fund, where such allocations existed.

Nearly every one of the junior college libraries participated in the cataloging process to a greater or lesser degree. Most did all of their cataloging, while in other cases the larger part was performed by a commercial firm or by agencies such as a public, county, or a central district library. Only one library out of 132 responding to the question did not perform any cataloging work. Of the other 131 libraries, 121 did all cataloging themselves; of the ten that had outside help, seven used Alanar Book Service, and all ten did some cataloging, such as rush books or material that could not be supplied by Alanar.

Rowland found that in over 70 per cent of junior college libraries the head librarian does the cataloging in addition to his other duties, and that only 17.3 per cent enjoy the service of a full-time cataloger. Clerical assistance in cataloging is scarce; less than 20 per cent of the libraries have one or more full-time clerks assisting with the work, and more than 60 per cent have no clerks at all for cataloging work.³

It is apparent that for many libraries a clear-cut organization and assignment of responsibility for cataloging is not possible. The usual small staff size often requires that all available hands pitch in and participate in both cataloging and order preparation, so that there may be a situation in which two or more professional librarians will each be doing processing work on a part-time basis in addition to public service and other tasks. In such a milieu, any discussion of separate order and catalog departments or of a combined technical services department is almost meaningless.

Junior college libraries consistently use the Dewey decimal classification; only five libraries (4 per cent of the total) used Library of Congress classification. There is a sense of dissatisfaction with Dewey, although it is well below one-quarter of all responses, and in most

Junior College Library Processing

cases the dissatisfaction is not strong enough to force a change to another system. Out of 135 libraries polled, 105 feel it is doing a good job for them while 25 noted faults that included difficulty in keeping up-to-date, and inconsistency in subject placement. One library complained that the sixteenth edition of Dewey segmented general subjects too much, while another deplored its lack of flexibility.

Only six libraries were considering a change in classification, in most cases to Library of Congress, but one library wished to consider a drastic modification of Dewey such as the Lamont Library system. A separate biography class is used by 75 per cent of the libraries, although two libraries departed from this procedure partially to place artists, musicians, and authors with the subject. Usually the letter B, or 92, or 921 is used for individual biography, and 920 for collected biography. It is somewhat surprising that 25 per cent of the responses indicated that biography was placed with the subject matter in Dewey.

Cutter numbers were used by nearly four out of five libraries employing Dewey; 79 per cent did so, and 21 per cent did not. There was some variation in the latter group, in that Cutter numbers were used by some libraries only in areas such as fiction and biography and not in the main classification. A separate fiction class was used by 83 per cent of the junior college libraries, usually designated by F or Fiction or Fic. and followed by the author's full name, the first letter of his name, or the appropriate Cutter number. Less than one fifth, or 17 per cent of the libraries, classified fiction in the 800's as literature.

A large number of respondents indicated use of Library of Congress subject headings; 67 (or 50 per cent) used the L.C. list, 43 (32 per cent) used Sears, 21 (15 per cent) used L.C. and Sears, and 4 (3 per cent) used other lists. These included Ball's *Subject Headings for the Information File, Readers' Guide*, Sears and *Subject Headings for Catholic Libraries*, and a three-decker combination of Sears, L.C., and the old American Library Association list.

Rowland's survey indicated that where L.C. and Sears were both used, all libraries used L.C. headings on L.C. cards and Sears' headings on Wilson cards or where original cataloging was done. A serious question of conflict of headings could occur in such a situation where L.C. and Sears' headings on comparable subjects vary.

Subject authority files were maintained by eighty-one libraries (or 60 per cent) while fifty-four (40 per cent) did not do so. The preferred form of the authority file was a checked copy of a standard list in fifty-four libraries (67 per cent), a card file in nineteen libraries (23

per cent) and entries in the card catalog in eight libraries (10 per cent). The use of the card catalog as a subject authority file was surprising, at least to the author, and it may be of some interest to describe its operation. Subject headings are drawn from whatever list is being used, are typed on the cards, and the cards filed unless there is an apparent conflict with headings already used or if the heading has not been used. In the former case, the conflict must be resolved with a decision, and in the latter case the heading is considered and adopted or changed and the appropriate references made. The system seems more applicable to larger libraries where the subject headings in use will be more numerous.

A good proportion of these libraries felt that the subject heading lists in use were inadequate; 26 per cent were not satisfied, with the most common complaints being not comprehensive enough, not enough "see" and "see also" references, and too general in terms used. Other faults mentioned were too detailed, too many references, too specific in its terms, out-of-date terminology, confusing terminology, and too frequent changes. Few libraries—10 per cent—were considering a change in their list, and half of these wanted only a modification of their present list. Six libraries were interested in adopting the L.C. list; only one inclined to Sears.

A very large majority of libraries used the A.L.A. filing rules, 105 (84 per cent); 19 (14 per cent) used L.C. rules, and 11 (8 per cent) others, e.g., Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Cleveland Public Library, Los Angeles Public School System, University of Washington, Streamline Filing, and locally developed rules.

There was evidenced a decided preference for the dictionary form of card catalog (113 libraries or 84 per cent), although a somewhat surprising number are using a divided catalog (22 libraries or 16 per cent), and it was evident from comments that a considerable number of libraries felt an interest in it. In eighteen libraries, the divided catalog consisted of author-title, and subject files; in four libraries, there were author, title, and subject files. Two libraries used a variation of the author-title, and subject division of the catalog, in which personal names as subjects are included in the author-title file, to assure that books by and about an author are brought together. This is desirable from the viewpoint of the catalog user, even though it introduces a complexity, and it is possible for a name to appear as subject although there may be no works by him in the library.

The major determinant of junior college library processing is the

Junior College Library Processing

size of the staff. It is small—sometimes excruciatingly so—and a constant cry in the survey answers was: “I am the only librarian,” “I have to do everything,” and “There is no help!” As Rowland has said, a major problem is the lack of help that forces a librarian to devote time to clerical tasks instead of to professional work.⁴ One cannot but be moved by the idealism and devotion shown in the many pencilled comments of hope and anticipation of better things to come—not for comfort or aggrandizement—but for the opportunity to give better service.

Junior college libraries themselves are on the small side, with over 59 per cent of them with collections below 20,000 items. This factor imposes or encourages certain processing characteristics that are usually connected with smaller institutions—although it is true that some larger libraries share in them too. Dewey is overwhelmingly preferred in classification; A.L.A. filing rules and separate biography and fiction classes are favored. It seems clear that a major need in the area under discussion is for more intensive study of each of the several subjects treated.

References

1. Rowland, Arthur Ray. “Cataloging and Classification in Junior College Libraries,” *Library Resources and Technical Services*, 7:254-258, Summer, 1963.
2. U.S. Office of Education. *Education Directory 1961-1962, Part 3: Higher Education*. Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962.
3. Rowland, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 258.