



Building the Book Collection

HUMPHREY A. OLSEN

FUNCTIONING AS PART of a comparatively new institution operating in many areas that have not yet been pinpointed, junior college libraries face many of the same problems confronting their senior counterparts plus distinctive problems of their own. Enrollments have mushroomed in this country from less than 500,000 after World War II¹ to 927,534 in 1963, with the increase over the previous year alone amounting to 13 per cent.² In 1963 one in every four persons starting college enrolled at a junior college, and it is predicted that by 1970, 75 per cent of those entering college will first attend a community college.³ With the enrollment explosion, it now takes all the running junior college librarians can do just to hold their own, and they will have to run twice as fast to improve conditions.

Attention will be focused in this paper on the differences between junior and senior institutions which affect the book collection, the characteristics of students, the facets of the collection, book selection, the reference collection, public documents, paperbacks, periodicals, and microforms.

One main difference between junior and senior colleges is the lack of research and research collections in the former. This simplifies matters for junior colleges, whereas other differences add complications: junior colleges can only influence students for two years instead of four or more as senior institutions can, and the diversity of junior college offerings often exceeds that of four-year colleges of the same size. The vast majority do not even remain two years, earlier transferring to other colleges, going off to jobs, or just dropping out. Instead of bewailing the fact that not all students who attend a junior college can profit from the experience, these institutions capitalize on the situation by trying to do everything they can to help any misfits dur-

The author is Librarian and Assistant Professor of English, Vincennes (Ind.) University Junior College.

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ing their short stay, whether it be a few weeks, a few months, or a year. The library, naturally, must do all it can to influence these persons as well as those who stay two years.

Norman E. Tanis has pointed out the “. . . complex nature of the American junior college . . .” and the often “bewildering diversity” of these institutions whose “burgeoning enrollments” are usually not accompanied by adequate finances.⁴ Besides general courses and the traditional liberal arts, junior colleges offer terminal programs, technical and apprenticeship training, preparation for business and management, and adult programs—to mention only a few. Besides lacking sufficient finances, their libraries are often handicapped by staff shortages, lack of space, and the constantly rising costs of books and supplies. For example, in public junior colleges the ratio of professional library staff to students in 1963/64 was 1:1,054 and in private colleges 1:325,³ whereas the standards call for one professional staff member for each 500 students enrolled.

The junior college library, operating in a challenging and little-explored territory between high school, vocational and technical school, senior college, and the adult department of the public library, has inherited some of the characteristics of each of these institutions, but the characteristics have been put together in different proportions in a new setting. The majority of students, just emerging from adolescence, are from eighteen to twenty-one years old. But allowance must be made for make-up, noncredit courses for those who read at the eighth grade level (or lower) or have other deficiencies, and for an older group with no upper age limit taking night classes. Thus in many cases the junior college provides a final opportunity to stimulate young adults to develop into well-rounded citizens alert to national and world problems and at the same time capable of enjoying literature, music, art, and other cultural activities. The book collection must meet the needs of these diverse groups.

Besides taking into consideration the characteristics of the students and the curricular offerings of the school, junior college librarians in building their collections need to make extensive studies of the effects of reading on students, particularly on students who come from homes with little or no cultural background. For instance, a teacher or librarian may recommend a book which he has enjoyed and from which he has profited, but how much does he really know about its appeal to and its influence on a student who is not book-minded? In the past we have assumed that such a recommendation is an important influ-

ence; but libraries today can no longer afford to operate on hunches. Long-range effects also must be examined thoroughly; why do many students who appear to be adequately motivated while in college lose interest in serious reading after graduation?

Albert Lake, although a public librarian, has set down some goals that apply equally to junior college libraries. The central collection ". . . would consist of books which have one or more qualities by which they have achieved a kind of immortality or give promise of doing so."⁵ He describes a peripheral sub-collection made up of the minor novel, superficial commentaries, and trivial philosophies (which ideally should have little or no place in the junior college), as well as reference and other such books which are more concerned with facts than literary value.⁶ Such a book as Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us* falls in Lake's first category by reason of its superb imaginative approach, and serves as an admirable introduction to the subject.⁷ Librarians should be on the lookout for similar books.

The writer is acquainted with senior college and university librarians who strive to acquire attractively illustrated editions whenever they are available, editions such as Heritage Press publications and the Dodd, Mead *Great Illustrated Classics*. Surely it is even more important to select such books for junior college students, many of whom have difficulty in interpreting print.

In addition to books supporting the curriculum and the philosophy of the school, the library should build a collection of professional books to meet the needs of the faculty, and should also offer recreational reading. The latter area may be less important where public library and paperback outlets are handy.

Today's standard of 20,000 volumes for a junior college is a far cry from that of 4,000 set by the American Association of Junior Colleges in 1930,⁸ but in the next few years this number will doubtless go even higher as enrollments swell, course offerings multiply, honors courses spread, and more teachers forsake the concept of a single textbook. Nationally only 23.4 per cent of junior college libraries meet the present standard, and the average number of books per student in public junior colleges is only 7.7, and in private ones 35.8.⁹ In fifty of the sixty-two libraries surveyed by the writer, for which statistics were available, the average holdings were 16,738 volumes, the range from 4,000 to 41,750. The average number of books added for this same group of libraries during 1963/64 was 1,759, from a low of 300 (in two libraries) to 4,702.⁹ It is not surprising that the library with the largest

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collection added the greatest number of books, nor that one of the libraries adding 300 had the smallest collection.

The collection should be well-balanced with the intention of covering all phases of human activity, not just those dictated by the course offerings. Some idea of suitable percentages for different fields can be obtained from studying standard lists, but each school has its peculiar characteristics, and percentages must be worked out with these in mind.

For the forty-eight libraries which reported the per cent of the educational and general budget of the school spent on the library, the average was 4.7, the lowest, 1.8, and the highest, 12.5. Fifteen libraries had 5 per cent or above, with thirty-three falling below that mark.⁹ On a national basis 47.3 per cent spend 5 per cent or more.³

The average proportion of the book budget reserved to be spent at the discretion of the librarian for buying encyclopedias, general books, and others crossing departmental lines, etc. was 37 per cent in the 28 libraries reporting this item. The range was from a low of 11 per cent to a high of 95 per cent. Nine librarians reported that 100 per cent of the fund was spent at their discretion; four reported no formal allotment, two stated the percentage was unknown, and one each said the amount was variable or none was allotted to be spent at the discretion of the librarian.

Libraries usually allocate amounts annually to departments on the basis of need. Many librarians find it advantageous to earmark a certain portion of the budget each year to be used in strengthening a weak area. As mentioned earlier in discussion of how to achieve a balanced collection, some idea of the importance of each field can be obtained from studying standard lists, although this information must always be modified to meet local conditions.

No individual should control entirely or almost entirely the process of selection. This statement applies to the head librarian or to any other person, no matter how well-trained and qualified he may be. In no single case among the sixty-two libraries surveyed did only one person do all the choosing. In thirty-nine libraries, however, the head librarian had the chief responsibility for selection; in ten libraries the teaching faculty had this responsibility. In three libraries the head librarian shared the responsibility equally with the teaching faculty; in three other instances he shared equally with the other members of the library staff, and in two cases equally with library staff, teaching faculty, administration, and students. In five instances other library

staff members had the main responsibility, but of course this would be impossible in libraries with a single professionally trained librarian. Forty-three stated that students participated in selection, and in twenty-six cases a library committee participated. Since the head librarian in many libraries is the person chiefly responsible for selection, even though in reality his role is mainly that of coordinator, it is valuable if he has had intensive bibliographic training in at least one subject field.

Branscomb's observation about the advantage a small library holds over a large one reads easily but is difficult to carry out in practice: "The fact that a small library intelligently selected is a better library than a larger one chosen without much discrimination, makes it easily possible for a college to overcome a financial handicap by careful planning."¹⁰ Many times the small library is located far from large libraries where the librarian would have a chance to examine books before buying. The small library is more likely to be understaffed, with fewer selection aids, and poorly financed. Often selection must be done after hours or in time snatched from other vital duties.

Fewer book selection aids are available which meet the specific needs of junior college libraries than is true of elementary, high school, and public libraries. The new entry in the field of book selection periodicals is *Choice*, which, although it is slanted toward the senior liberal arts college, was rated very useful by twenty-seven librarians, fairly useful by nine, and of limited value by six. One librarian ignored the three categories suggested by the writer and labeled it "useful" without any qualification. Nineteen either had not seen it, were not ready to assess its value, or chose to ignore that part of the questionnaire. The writer requested librarians to list the six most valuable aids in order of their value, and *Choice* garnered more first place votes—seventeen—than any other aid, and was mentioned twenty-nine times in all. *Library Journal*, although it received only ten first place votes (two of them for its book reviews on cards), was mentioned thirty-six times, or more than any other aid. *New York Times Book Review* was placed first by nobody, yet was listed by thirty. *The Booklist and Subscription Books Bulletin: A Guide to Current Books* was the first choice of five librarians and was mentioned twenty-seven times in all. *Saturday Review*, with no first or second places, totaled nineteen mentions; *Publishers' Weekly* was rated first by four and was mentioned a total of seventeen times. Publishers' catalogs and advertisements also were first choice of four, with a total of seventeen men-

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tions. *Book Review Digest* received eleven votes; *Book Week*, ten. The *London Times Literary Supplement* was mentioned by only three librarians, but two of them rated it first—which may suggest that many junior colleges are insufficiently acquainted with this aid. *New York Review of Books* was cited three times, and *Wilson Library Bulletin* six times for its reviews of reference books.

Of the selection aids in book form, Charles Trinkner's *Basic Books for Junior College Libraries* was first choice of all the aids in five cases, and was mentioned a total of nine times.¹¹ Hester Hoffman's *Reader's Adviser*, which received no first place votes, was mentioned by eleven.¹² Frank Bertalan's *Books for Junior Colleges*, probably because it is outdated (1954) and only a supplemental list, was mentioned only three times; a new basic edition, however, is being prepared and will include out-of-print as well as in-print titles.¹³ *Subject Guide to Books in Print* and *Books in Print*, publications of R. R. Bowker Co., were mentioned six times and five times, respectively. Interestingly, the Florida State Department of Education *Basic Materials* series was cited by two librarians, neither of them in Florida.¹⁴

Of the sixty-two libraries surveyed, five reported a continuing program of checking against standard lists, while twenty-five others had checked against such lists since 1959. Other librarians were right in pointing out the scarcity of good recent junior college booklists; others stated that no library should depend too much on lists.

Thirty-five of the sixty-two libraries reported weeding constantly to eliminate out-of-date materials. In many cases, however, the wish is doubtless stronger than reality; of forty librarians reporting number of books withdrawn, the average was 205 volumes excluding two libraries which must have been undergoing a major overhaul in withdrawing 4,830 and 3,511 volumes, respectively.⁹

Most persons agree that the library should provide material on all sides of controversial questions, but the application of this principle to specific cases is often difficult. How many and what books should the library have in favor of Communism? If a local Birch Society presents the library with twenty-five books on the far right, should the library accept them and then proceed to balance them with an equal number on the far left?

Junior college librarians can often save money by cooperating with other libraries in their neighborhood, particularly by cutting down on duplicate buying of expensive sets which will receive comparatively little use. They can also make use of interlibrary loans to supplement

their collections. Of the thirty-nine libraries reporting interlibrary loans, the average for 1963/64 was forty-six. Although all interlibrary loans were lumped together under "interlibrary loan transactions," presumably most were loans from other libraries. The largest number of such loans reported was 305 and the smallest was 13. Of the eleven libraries not reporting interlibrary loans, five had less than 10,000 books each, two less than 12,000, two were near the 20,000 mark, and one had 29,000 volumes.⁹ Surely libraries with under 20,000 books could profitably use interlibrary loan.

Textbooks should be purchased sparingly and only when no other more satisfactory material is available. Multiple copies should only be added when their purchase is clearly justified; this is particularly true in a small library, which already is likely to suffer from a shortage of suitable titles.

The reference collection will never include all the books which might be referred to for information but does include the books most likely to be consulted for specific information. The number will vary from library to library, but twenty-six libraries which reported this item to the writer in 1963 had an average of 1,390 reference volumes (excluding bound periodicals). The average ratio of their reference collections to total bookstock was 8.4 per cent. Since even college and university libraries feel the need for at least one set of encyclopedias at the high school level, such as *World Book Encyclopedia*, junior colleges will feel a similar need. Constance Winchell's *Guide to Reference Books* was mentioned by eight librarians as an essential selection aid, and others mentioned *The Booklist and Subscription Books Bulletin* and *Wilson Library Bulletin*. Because of the high cost, reference sets should be purchased only after careful consideration.

Documents—United Nations, national, and state—should be acquired as needed from catalogs issued by various agencies. But if there is a government depository nearby, the junior college library may not need to duplicate documents available there. Small libraries, in particular, should supplement their limited holdings with pamphlets obtained free or at a reasonable price through information furnished in the *Vertical File Index*.

In the sixty-two libraries surveyed by the writer, paperbacks are purchased by forty-eight when hard-bound editions are not available and by twenty-four libraries for additional copies of hard-bound editions. Thirty-eight libraries purchase paperbacks and have them bound, while four others sometimes do this. Four libraries mentioned

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reinforcing paperbacks instead of binding them, even though hardbounds are available, in order to save money, particularly in cases where the paperbacks would receive relatively little use. Three purchase prebound paperbacks, and two libraries have uncataloged collections of popular paperbacks, such as mysteries and westerns. No library reported that it was currently selling paperbacks, although one had done so in the past but had given up the practice because of a limited staff. As vending machines become available which will make it possible for libraries to sell selected paperbacks, libraries may enter this business and become a powerful force in stimulating students to build up libraries of their own.

Dorothy Mae Poteat has suggested 122 as the minimum number of magazines for the junior college.¹⁵ The fifty libraries answering this question reported an average of 167 periodicals, ranging from 73 to 518; thirteen had fewer than 122 and eight under 100.⁹ A survey of thirty-two junior college libraries by the writer in 1963 disclosed an average of seven newspapers received. Besides local, state, and national newspapers, every library should have at least one foreign newspaper of the caliber of *The Manchester Guardian*. Periodicals should be selected not only with their relation to curricular offerings in mind but also to their reference value through use of back copies by way of periodical indexes.

Charles Joseph Benson concluded, from a study of the use of periodicals in a junior college library, that "More than half of the use of periodicals seems to have been more or less unrelated to course work."¹⁶ He felt that in many cases "the junior college librarian might well decide that acquisition of materials for recreational purposes unrelated to courses of instruction should be made only after full support has been given to the instructional program."¹⁶

Of the sixty-two librarians queried by this writer, fifty-nine took *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, two the *Abridged Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* and one received no periodical index at all. The number of subscriptions to other indexes were: *Education Index*, 27; *International Index to Periodicals*, 26; *Applied Science and Technology Index*, 15; *Business Periodicals Index*, 11; *New York Times Index*, 10; *Biography Index*, 8; *Art Index*, 6; *Public Affairs Information Service*, 5; *Cumulative Index to Nursing Literature*, 5; *Book Review Digest*, 4 (doubtless taken by many more libraries which consider it primarily a book selection aid); *Library Literature* and *Biological and Agricultural Index*, 3; *Catholic Periodical Index*, *Index to Dental*

Literature in the English Language, Historical Abstracts 1775-1945 and Biological Abstracts, 2; Engineering Index, Architectural Index, Accountants' Index, Christian Science Monitor Index, Chemical Abstracts, Psychological Abstracts, and Abstracts of English Studies, one each.

Of sixty-two libraries surveyed, five mentioned having some Xerox or other photocopies of books but did not specify the number. Twelve libraries had microfilm copies, ranging from 2 to 2,000 with an average of 419. Four libraries have the *New York Times* on microfilm; two libraries each reported having eighty-six periodicals on microfilm. The only library which reported having Microcards had two books in this form. The argument on bound magazines versus magazines on microfilm continues; but if the library has sufficient space, bound periodicals have several advantages. Microfilm for newspapers, on the other hand, means added permanence, a great saving in space, and greater convenience in use.

Junior college librarians, along with others, will watch with interest the revolutionary library on microfiche (3" by 5" transparent sheets) envisioned by Park Forest (Ill.) College. Each student will be provided with an individual projector the size of a lunch box. By this means the college hopes to cut the cost of a million volumes from 25 million dollars to two million.¹⁷ However this experiment turns out, books in something like their present form are likely to play an important role in the junior college library's future, if the library can survive the severe growing pains and the lack of focus from which it now suffers.

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