



The Library's Place in the Junior College

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THIS PAPER rests on two basic postulates: that all junior college libraries, while different, have a common set of characteristics which gives them a degree of similarity, and that the effectiveness of the library is contingent upon the fulfillment of a group of mutual obligations between the library and the other facets of the college community.

The terms used in the title should be defined before the discussion proceeds. The library is the agency within the college concerned with aiding the college in the fulfillment of its objectives by the pursuit, dissemination and preservation of recorded information. Use of the term will imply its four dimensions, viz., staff, resources, services, and facilities. The junior college is "a post-high school educational institution offering a 2-year program either of a terminal nature or as preparation for further training. . . ." ¹ Hereafter it will be referred to as the college. By "place" is meant the relationship of the library to the rest of the college.

In order to gain some insight into the philosophy, practice, and thinking of junior college librarians on the subject, a survey has been made, involving one hundred junior colleges, or one out of every seven in the United States. It was a random sample based on the sixth edition of *American Junior Colleges*.² Each librarian was asked to fill out a questionnaire and to give additional comments if he desired. Information from the questionnaire will be inserted from time to time, along with the stated references.

The first relationship to be noted between the library and the college is a legal relationship. Any organization of higher education has its basis in some form of corporate charter. The junior college owes its existence either to acts of the state legislature or to state laws in which provisions are made for the establishment of institutions of

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higher education. The college library is provided for in the by-laws, articles of incorporation, or the college charter (or by whatever name such a document is known). The role and functions of the library are generally spelled out in the institutional handbook or catalog.³ Of the one hundred librarians who responded to the survey, fifty-one said that in the by-laws—or whatever the document was called—the library was mentioned. Twenty-seven were not certain, and twelve said that it was not so mentioned.

The next relationship is that of the library and the academic community. Academic community implies an element of physical proximity, but much more is involved, however, because the members of the academic community may not reside in a given locale. By definition, the academic community consists of the members of the college family or group, the administration, faculty, students, and in some cases wives and families of the faculty members. To state it another way, the academic community is composed of the persons whom the library is obligated to serve. The main concern of the library will be the students, the faculty, and the administration (but not necessarily in that order). To each of these groups the library has a definite responsibility.

The student body of the junior college may be divided into two broad groups: terminal and university parallel students.⁴ Another division would separate them into full-time, part-time, and special. The terminal student will end his formal education with the end of the second year of college. It is to be hoped, however, that this will not be the end of his education. The library must acquaint such a student with the vast store of information to be found in graphic form. It should further enable him to be familiar with the literature of his subject field so that professional competence can be maintained, and he can take his proper place in the social order. To the student who will continue his education in a four-year college or university, the library has an additional responsibility. Without overlooking any of the above mentioned factors, the library must implant in the student a set of sound habits of library use. The librarian should be sensitive to the needs of the students. Each student should be made to feel that the library exists for the fulfillment of his educational needs. The faculty must also work closely with the library staff to bring about this relationship.

The variation in the intellectual level of the faculty and of the students will result in a relationship with the library which will differ,

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but not too vastly. In his book, *The Community College in Action*, Peter Sammartino reports, regarding the position of the faculty in the institution, "It is the chief business of any teacher to give the student zest for purposeful activity whether it be in the art of living or in earning a living."⁵ The faculty is the mainspring of the college instructional program and if the instruction is to be successful, it is imperative that the faculty give vitality and diversity to their instructional efforts. In addition to being a coefficient to the teaching process and activity, the library should perform for the faculty certain specific functions.

The alert teacher is ever seeking new approaches and instructional methods. He will be concerned about new trends and new ideas which will improve his class presentations. By working with the librarian, such a person will be able to obtain materials in the field of education which will aid him in the accomplishment of his aims. The library staff is responsible for working with faculty members to acquire materials which will aid in their preparation for classes. This presupposes not only the literature of a given field but literature which discusses methods as well. The librarian, when preparing the budget, should take into consideration materials which will be used only by the faculty in their preparation for classes, and to this end see that funds are available.

In addition to materials for class preparation, the library should be the source of some professional reading for the faculty. Due to the rapidity with which ideas and philosophies regarding various subjects tend to change, the library must cooperate with the faculty to see that professional literature is available when needed. Much of the professional literature will be in the form of periodicals which will represent a considerable expenditure. This, again, must be taken into consideration by the librarian when making up the budget.

Finally, the library should be the source, for the faculty, of materials for research and study, and this may or may not overlap with what has been called professional reading. In this area, interlibrary loan is often an asset, but cannot be expected completely to fill the need. The librarian should set aside a part of the budget for this seemingly little used area of the library collection.

In this context it is necessary to say a word about the faculty library committee and its functions. Among the respondents to the questionnaire, ninety said that they had a library committee. This committee is appointed by either the president or the dean (in every case the

person to whom the librarian reported) in eighty-eight cases. The librarian in the remaining two cases had the privilege of selecting his own committee. Seventy said that the committee had proven to be helpful, nine did not answer the question, and eleven said that it was not helpful. Librarians stated that they received assistance in the allocation of the budget to various departments, in book selection in various special subject fields, and in effective liaison between the faculty and the librarian. The library committee can be of assistance to the librarian in other ways. It can keep him informed of the needs and dissatisfactions of the faculty,⁶ and can assist in the promotion of the use of the services of the library.⁷ The library committee was generally viewed with favor by the librarians in the survey. However, among the comments which accompanied the responses were such statements as: the library committee members show little interest, have axes to grind, try to usurp all the budget for their departments, and often try to wield authority which they do not have.

The college library exists for the purpose of aiding the college in the fulfillment of its objectives. In this respect, the library serves the college in three ways: as a teaching agency, as a materials center, and as a reading and study center. As a teaching agency, the library has the responsibility of continuing classroom instruction, in one sense of the word; but more realistically the library, along with the classroom instructor, must provide also the beginning of instruction. Probably the one most effective method of achieving this is the orientation period. To be effective it must be organized carefully and take place both inside and outside the library.⁸ To state it simply, teaching is the process of making known to a student some fact or body of facts by explanation, example, or general exposure to said facts. Teaching on the part of the library, as is the case in the classroom, must be both relevant and appealing if it is to be successful. The responsibility of the library staff is to teach a working knowledge of the tools and facilities of the library.⁹

In addition to or, more specifically, along with the teaching function, the library serves as a materials center for the academic community. Books, periodicals, and pamphlets form the well-established stock of the library, but in addition to the library should include whatever materials are best suited to aid in the achievement of the objectives of the library and of the academic community in the instructional process. Among the more conventional types of non-print items is the vast store of audio-visual materials which is irreplaceable in the in-

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structional program. More and more the trend is to place the audio-visual materials under the auspices of the library. The American Library Association, in drawing up the standards for junior college libraries, included this as a part of the library collection.¹⁰ This is not to say that the library should vie with any other agency of the college for control of the audio-visual materials, but in the absence of such other agency the library should take the initiative in providing audio-visual materials for the institution. In order that the service in this as well as other areas may be efficient and effective, adequate provision must be made in terms of staff and budget, and the same high standards should prevail in the selection of these materials as of books. Again must be mentioned the element of faculty cooperation.

Finally the library functions as a reading and study center. In spite of the criticism of librarians that the library is too often a study hall where the students read their textbooks, it is often a very necessary service. One survey revealed that some 50 per cent of the students who came to the library came for the purpose of studying their own textbooks.¹¹ The other 50 per cent of the library users are the main concern of the library in its attempt to function as a reading and study center. Some junior colleges are commuters' colleges rather than residential institutions, and the library may provide the only place where the student can do class preparation while at school. The faculty must work with the student in encouraging independent study and with the librarian to aid in the provision of library materials which will make for recreational reading as well. One factor which has and will continue to change the pattern of library use as a reading center is the rapid production of paperback books.¹² With the advent of many classics in sturdy and inexpensive paper-bound books, it is easy for the student to build his own personal library.¹³ In spite of the advance of the paperback, the library must continue to be a reading center for the students of the college. One of the most effective ways in which this may be accomplished is to provide and call attention to new and less well-known materials. The library's objective is to aid the college in the fulfillment of its objective which is in effect to help the student take his place in society. For a democratic society presupposes an informed citizenry.

In discussing the importance of interpreting the services of the library to its clientele, it is necessary to go back to an axiom of unknown origin: "If a man builds a better mouse trap than his neighbor, he rids himself of mice; if he advertises the mouse trap, he rids the world of

mice." Having provided the right materials for students and faculty, having performed the function of teaching, and having served as a reading center, it is the obligation of the librarian to interpret services of the library to the clientele. When interpretation is involved, no element of the academic community can be overlooked or underestimated, and it is better to begin not with the students but with the administration and especially the faculty. They are, after all, the more stable elements of the academic community and can be most instrumental in spreading the word around.

In the present survey, 90 per cent of the librarians said that their mechanisms for communication with the administration consisted not only of annual or semiannual reports, but direct contact with the president or dean to whom they were responsible. The members of the faculty and administration are usually busy people, and an effort to keep them informed will be both appreciated and helpful. The librarian should use this contact with the president or dean both to keep him informed and to give him an idea of the needs of the library. With the faculty, the methods of interpretation will be different but no less intense. The librarian will not only keep them informed of new acquisitions and resources, but will solicit from them assistance in making known to students the services which the library is able to offer. The faculty can be of considerable assistance in stimulating and guiding students in their use of the library.¹⁴

The mechanisms for interpreting library services will vary from one institution to another. Probably among the most important is that of personal acquaintance. Where the college staff is small and enjoys an intimate relationship, this can be effected without too much difficulty or effort. With a larger staff it will require more effort, and other means must be used for the communication of information to the various departments and members of the academic community. Some of these are the library handbook, the annual report, the college catalog, the college newspaper, lists of new books, a library bulletin, book displays, and exhibits.¹⁵ It is often effective (as well as good public relations) to ask members of various academic departments to participate in the preparation of displays concerning their fields of study.

Instruction in the use of the library is also of importance in the interpretation of the library's services to its users. The curriculum may not provide for a course in the use of the library, but by working closely with the faculty it is often possible to obtain a few units of class time in which to provide instruction in the use of the library.

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This formal instruction is often very important, since many students come from high schools where the library and its potential have not been sufficiently emphasized. The college librarian with his training is qualified and often very competent in instruction.¹⁶

The junior college is often called the community college because its major function is service to the community.¹⁷ Therefore the college library too is concerned with service to the general as well as the academic community. Although its first obligation is to the academic community, the college librarian should seek in every way to cooperate with other librarians in the community. The positive values of such cooperation cannot be over-emphasized. In 76 per cent of the libraries surveyed, library cooperation was not only endorsed but was a reality. Twenty per cent of the librarians said that their facilities were open to the general public, and many of the respondents felt that interlibrary cooperation should not be limited to a given town, city, or village, but should extend as far and wide as is practical.

Achieving cooperation between librarians of a given area begins by becoming familiar with the needs of one's neighbors. Once needs and interests are known, the next step is very often a matter of achieving some form of loose organization which will serve the purpose. In time, union catalogs may be formed or sometimes union lists of serial holdings. Questions from business and industry should be welcomed, and the college librarian should take an active part in the community and seek to interpret the role of his library to the general community.¹⁸ The junior college library should become a member of a team of libraries committed to the provision of better library services for all.¹⁹

By way of summary, it may be said that the library's place in the junior college is the center. This does not claim or imply that it occupies a superior position to any other entity of the college, but by the same token it does not occupy an inferior one either. The effectiveness of the library is based upon a kind of reciprocal cooperation between the library and all other parts of the academic community.

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