



Introduction

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THIS ISSUE OF *Library Trends* identifies trends in school library services administered in the United States at the system level for school districts. It assumes that such services are a significant development in American education, worth serious consideration by those concerned with the improvement of learning through effective library programs.

This is the second issue in the history of this journal devoted entirely to school library development. The January 1953 issue, edited by Alice Lohrer, focused attention on the influences affecting school library development, administrative control, types of library services in elementary and secondary schools, research and evaluation. Ruth Ersted,¹ reporting on school library supervision at state and national levels, identified the appointment of city and county school library supervisors as one possible result of state supervision. Except for occasional references to system-level programs of technical processing, to professional library services to teachers and administrators and to supervision, there is no direct treatment in this earlier publication of system-level programs of school library services.

Fifteen years later, developments amply justify devoting a further issue to exploring trends in services and programs at the school district level.

Homer O. Elseroad,² Superintendent of Schools in Montgomery County, Maryland, has stated that principals and librarians developing school libraries need help and counsel additional to that which a busy superintendent can provide. He recommends appointment of a well-qualified staff of school library supervisors to stimulate library improvement through in-service education of school personnel and to advise the school superintendent on goals, standards, facilities and methods to encourage student and teacher use of materials.

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The 1960 *Standards for School Library Programs*³ considered the value of system-wide and multi-school services. Discussing revision of these standards, Frances Henne identified as major areas of concern "new developments in centralized processing; commercial cataloging and processing of materials; the computer produced printed book catalog of library resources in a school system; [and] the services of district or multi-district instructional materials centers with suggested plans for their design and operation."⁴

The papers presented in this issue of *Library Trends* are of two types. One group treats specific aspects of district school library administration and services. Another consists of descriptive case studies of school district programs designed to indicate their history, present practices and emerging trends.

The background paper by Charles L. Willis analyzes school district organization as it is today, identifying emerging patterns of significance to those planning district school library services. He relates the variety of system-wide administrative arrangements for school services to the existence of decentralized government in the United States.

Willis reports the reorganization of small school districts into larger units, the establishment of an administrative level between the state and a number of local school districts, and efforts of several kinds to decentralize exceptionally large districts. He questions whether adequate data exist to determine precisely the optimum size of a school district, assuming that a number of other factors must be considered in addition to size.

Willis is particularly helpful to those planning library services in his analysis of "significant and interlocking thrusts" accompanying increasing size of schools and school districts. He challenges librarians at the system level to become involved in the administrative process, rather than to be only reactors to change. He sees innovation as an administrative responsibility but concludes that major innovations in methods of operating do not characterize most school systems today. Librarians are reminded that they must seek new ways to interpret library services in terms of benefits to pupils.

Richard L. Darling discusses professional positions in school librarianship at the school district level, summarizing published research which provides information about these positions. He reports on his own study of one hundred school systems to determine the

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number and kinds of professional positions in school librarianship at the district level, the range of salaries for these positions and the number of supportive clerical positions. Darling shows the need for further study of library positions at the district level in the context of organizational patterns of supervision for school libraries and other educational activities.

Eleanor H. Ahlers has collaborated with Perry D. Morrison to study materials center services at the school district level. The history of school district materials centers is summarized, showing the influences that have affected their character. Ahlers and Morrison foresee the coordination of district materials centers into networks related to statewide services, if Federal funds are available.

They report on their study of a sampling of 183 school districts (including at least one district from each state) to determine the size and nature of the district materials centers. The purposes and services of these programs are analyzed, and they consider services to students as well as to educators, the relationship of processing centers to the materials center, production of materials, consultative services related to materials, in-service education programs, organizational patterns, and the impact of Federal funds. Ahlers and Morrison conclude that the type of district school materials center recommended in the 1960 *Standards for School Library Programs*³ seems useful and necessary, and is developing fast in this country.

Frances Henne presents a comprehensive and stimulating statement on standards for school library programs at the district level. Because of her experiences as Chairman of the Standards Revision Committee for the American Association of School Librarians for the school library standards published in 1960, as well as for those scheduled for publication in 1968-69, she is exceptionally well qualified to write on this subject.

Henne points out that standards related to school library supervisory programs have been in the past almost entirely qualitative in nature. She explains the reasons for the recent decision of the Joint Committee representing the Department of Audiovisual Instruction and the American Association of School Librarians to delay quantitative standards for district school library or media programs. Among the factors affecting development of more adequate qualitative and quantitative standards for use at the system level are the necessity for research to determine requirements of library services of quality in districts varying widely in nature and size, the complexity of con-

sidering realistically a wide range of media when some are as yet only in the developmental stage, and the emergence of innovative schemes of service involving education agencies at all levels.

Henne is provocative in her analysis of present developments that suggest standards for operational purposes. She predicts future developments at national, regional, state and local levels that will affect the nature and purpose of media services required at the school district level. Recognizing the impact of rapid change in society and education and the advancement of technology, she presents clearly the reasons for continuous revision of school library standards and for more frequent publication than has been the case in the past.

Mary Helen Mahar discusses the effects of Federal legislation on school library services at the system level, noting that there is no direct provision in the present legislation for such services. She describes possible ways in which Federal funds may have influenced the development of system-level services and describes actual programs in existence and funded by the Federal government. Mahar reports that although the Title II program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act does not provide for personnel the program has stimulated initiation of employment of district school library supervisors. She also reports that coordinators of Title II programs in state departments of education have indicated that more school districts would employ such supervisors if qualified personnel were available and if there were funds for salaries.

Mahar feels that the special purpose grants allowed through Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for demonstration centers of instructional materials and the innovative projects supported by Title III of this same Act have potential for in-service education of library and other educational personnel. She states that although the Elementary and Secondary Education Act has created some problems for school library personnel, one of its greatest contributions has been the growth of school district services in instructional materials. The need for research and evaluation is stressed, particularly in view of the change and growth in the school library field.

In planning this issue it was recognized that centralized services in technical processes are an important aspect of district school library services. It was decided, however, that this subject had been treated adequately by Darling in his paper, "School Library Processing Centers," published in *Library Trends* in July 1967.⁵

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The papers by Virginia McJenkin, Frances Hatfield, Sue Hefley, Mildred Nickel and Mildred L. Krohn are descriptive case studies of the district school library programs for which they have responsibility. Their approaches vary, which is in keeping with the variations in the programs described. Nevertheless all consider some historical data, administrative relationships and control, program objectives, methods and staffing. Although there is no attempt to evaluate these programs scientifically, in each case the authors give some indication of the program's effectiveness.

Analysis of these case studies supports Willis's assumptions that school districts in America follow a variety of organizational and administrative patterns. It also shows that in these cases achievement of educational goals is affected by the extent of involvement of library personnel in the entire school enterprise. The force of Federal support and, in one case, private support is clearly demonstrated. These studies also show that district school library services require library leadership and involvement of school administrators and instructional supervisors, as well as of teachers and librarians in individual schools. Financial support, personnel, space, equipment and materials must all be provided at the district level if the district programs of school library supervision and service are to be effective.

Flexibility in programming and administration appears to be especially important in view of continuing changes in education today. It is encouraging to note that the programs described have taken advantage of many opportunities for support and advancement.

The challenges to district school library supervisors and administrators are many. Federal, state and district responsibilities and relationships must be defined. More adequate provision of all educational media must be considered in a program that is educationally and administratively sound. The potential of automation must be explored. More cooperative relationships must be developed within the education structure as well as with other types of library services. Assessment of district school library services to show results in the learning and living patterns of young people is perhaps the most challenging task of all.

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