



The Fulton County, Georgia, Program

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MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS AGO the school administrators and patrons in Fulton County began to demonstrate their "belief in the right of every boy and girl to have the pleasures, the understandings, and the experiences that come from sharing the best in the recorded impressions and expressions of mankind."¹ These leaders recognized that library service within the local school is an essential part of a well-rounded educational program.

The first concerted impetus came in 1935-36. At that time the problem was how to establish school libraries in a county which was spread over 541 square miles; which contained eighty-five elementary schools, and seven senior high schools; which included every type of school from a one-teacher, remote rural school, to a large urban senior high school in the wealthiest residential section of the community; where the financial resources were exceedingly limited; and where the two professionally trained librarians were already serving the three largest senior high schools. The organization and development of central secondary school libraries had begun in the early thirties. In the spring of 1935 a sizable sum of money made available from the sale of rental textbooks, and the first state library matching fund stimulated the selection, acquisition, and organization of library book collections for all of the elementary schools.

From that beginning in 1935 there have been many changes in size, organization, and program. There has been annexation of some schools into the Atlanta school system, consolidation of small schools, expansion of library staffs on the central department and local school levels, continuous increase in financing, and constant growth.

The high school librarian who had served as part-time supervisor became the full-time director in 1942; she was given the responsibility for the supervision of all library activities in the elementary and

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secondary schools of the county. The first full-time professional elementary librarians were appointed in 1948. Today, in 1967, forty-three trained librarians and eight clerical assistants serve fifty elementary schools, twenty-two trained librarians and twelve clerks serve fifteen secondary schools, and two librarians and one clerk serve two small twelve-grade schools. In the central library department there are five professional librarians, including the director and administrative assistant, and five clerical assistants.

In 1935-36 the total library budget was \$5,550. The budget for library materials in 1965-66 was \$225,000. Currently the average number of books per child county-wide is thirteen; and recordings, filmstrips, microfilm, pictures and other newer media are being included in local school library collections. In the central audio-visual department under the supervision of a professionally trained director and a staff of five clerical assistants films, filmstrips, tapes, art reproductions, and cross-media kits are housed and circulated to all schools. The audio-visual department has a separate budget for these centrally housed materials, but the directors of the two departments often pool resources to provide a maximum number and variety of materials for all collections.

The foregoing facts and figures tell one part of the story, but not the most important part. In 1935 the system set as its aim, "that each school library shall not only be the workshop for the exercise of study habits and skills, but that it shall become the source of intellectual inspiration for each boy and girl using it."² Slightly different words might express present-day aims but basically the goals are the same—to support and undergird the total educational program of every boy and girl in Fulton County. In striving to achieve these goals, all persons concerned with the library program have emphasized:

1. In-service programs for teachers and librarians which stress selection, knowledge, and use of all types of library material; and,
2. The place of the library in all curriculum activities. Its role is manifold: it helps children and young people acquire the necessary library skills which will make them proficient users of library materials, it seeks a way to plan interrelated library-classroom activities, it supplies fluid collections of print and non-print materials to classrooms and departments, it identifies special needs of individual children and young people, it helps children and young people acquire and develop listening and

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viewing skills, it encourages them to pursue independent study related to classroom activities and individual interests, and it helps them to love reading and to read critically and extensively.

A quotation from *Standards for School Library Programs*³ provides the criteria for judging the quality of the library program in the Fulton County Schools: "The most important part of the library program is the work with students and teachers, those activities and services that make the library an educational force in the school." What physical facilities, staff, materials, and services are available to implement quality library service?

All of the schools have attractive, well-equipped library quarters which include a reading area, story-hour area (in elementary schools), work, office, and conference areas. In addition, newer library quarters have carrels, and listening and viewing stations for independent study; reference rooms; storage spaces for all types of media; and a teachers' workroom especially designed and equipped for professional study and preparation of classroom materials. The designs of library quarters have changed from simple rectangular spaces to a complex of spaces to provide for effective use of all types of instructional materials.

The central library department is housed in a recently constructed functional services building. The physical quarters for the department were planned to include space and equipment for centralized services to all schools, for the ordering of all library materials, and for the cataloging and processing of some books, including those for new schools, and all non-book materials. Space was provided for an extensive collection of professional books, periodicals, and bulletins used by teachers, principals, librarians, curriculum directors and other specialists. This space was arranged to facilitate advisory and consultative service in the selection, purchase, and use of all instructional materials. Space was also provided for an examination center in which review copies of new books from approximately sixty publishers are housed.

The seventy-two librarians meet state certification, which includes certification for teachers plus special requirements for professional preparation in library science—twenty-nine holding fifth- or sixth-year certificates, and forty-three holding four-year certificates. Nine in the latter group are enrolled in a graduate program. These librarians are providing leadership on faculty teams in expanding and enriching the total instructional program. Their duties range from

those of teacher to those of specialist, department head, and administrator.

Full-time clerical assistants in all secondary schools and part-time clerical assistants in eighteen elementary schools assume responsibility for many essential routines, and thus release the professional librarians for service to students and teachers.

Student library assistants in both elementary and secondary schools render important service to their schools and at the same time gain valuable training and experience in the use of library resources. At the elementary level, the assistants are selected from each grade group and serve as the liaison between classroom and library. On the secondary level, students have the opportunity of participating on the library staff by electing Library Education. Many of the student assistants are active in and assume leadership in the district and state student library assistant organizations.

Adult volunteers render valuable service in many schools under the supervision of the professional librarians. They assist in processing materials, perform routine tasks, serve as library chairmen in the Parent-Teacher Association, and in two secondary schools are responsible for providing extended library service during several evenings each week.

As indicated earlier, substantial financial support from local and state tax funds is available for the purchase of library materials. An established formula is used to provide capital outlay funds for basic book collections for new schools. The selection, acquisition, and cataloging of these collections is begun two years prior to the opening of the schools. Regular allocations for library materials in each eligible area are made from National Defense Education Act, Title III funds. All funds appropriated under Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act are used for library materials. The average per pupil expenditure budgeted for library materials for 1966-67 was \$5.80.

Local school book collections meet regional and minimum national standards; and all schools have collections of periodicals, flat pictures, recordings, cross-media kits and filmstrips. Experimentally, slides, loop films, tapes, microfilm, transparencies, and three-dimensional art reproductions are being placed in selected school collections. These collections with their varied form, content, and level of appeal are changing the libraries into true instructional materials

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centers, and they are assisting in meeting the curriculum needs and individual interests of students and teachers.

The administration of the total library program emanates from the central library office under the supervision of the library director. The library director, in cooperation with the finance director, and the administrative assistant in the library department, prepares and justifies the budget. The library director, the administrative assistant, the purchasing agent, and a designated member of the board of education prepare and negotiate contracts for all purchases. The administrative assistant in the library department coordinates library orders and expenditures for the central department and for all schools. Orders for library books, periodicals, bulletins, audio-visual materials, supplies, and incidental equipment for all schools are placed through the central library department.

One professional librarian prepares the orders for new school collections, directs the cataloging and processing of these collections, and works with the librarians when the schools open; a second professional librarian is in charge of the ordering, cataloging, and processing of materials for the professional library; and a third professional librarian catalogs all materials processed through the central department.

A modified type of central cataloging and processing is provided for library materials for all schools. The processing and adapting of printed catalog cards for books purchased by established schools is done by the local school library staffs. Multiple titles purchased under NDEA, Title I, or Title II, are cataloged and processed in the central department. Printed catalog cards are purchased from the Georgia State Cataloging Service, H. W. Wilson Company, Library of Congress, and/or Bowker Company for all libraries. Sets of locally made catalog cards needed in quantity are reproduced in the central department for all schools. All recordings, filmstrips, slides, tapes, kits, flat pictures and realia are cataloged and processed in the central department.

The library program in each school and county-wide has expanded because of planned efforts on the part of the system administration to provide functional physical quarters, adequate staff, and well-rounded collections of materials; but this program has grown in depth because of improved services, and experimental activities undertaken cooperatively by pupils, librarians, other teachers, and

administrators. Library service has spread beyond the four walls of the library quarters.

In-service experiences for librarians and other teachers are the "key" to some of this growth. Descriptions of some activities illustrate this aspect of the program:

1. Orientation meetings are held for teachers new to the system to explain available library services on the local and system level.
2. In-service reading courses are offered by the library director in the use and knowledge of library books in specialized curriculum areas.
3. Regularly scheduled meetings are held with all librarians and are planned to provide stimulating professional experiences.
4. All librarians participate in a well-established plan to read and evaluate continuously the new books which are sent to the central department examination center by approximately sixty publishers.
5. Provision is made each year for all librarians to spend two full days examining new books before placing book orders.
6. Sessions are arranged in which the audio-visual director displays and demonstrates new audio-visual equipment and new media.
7. With the full approval of the administration, librarians are encouraged to attend state, regional, and national professional meetings.

An experimental program which has been made possible through Federal funds is an extension of regularly planned in-service activities. The system proposal for a grant under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was for leadership development on the secondary school level to improve instruction. This grant was approved and the program is in its second year of operation. Basically the grant provides funds for additional personnel to release subject department chairmen from teaching for approximately one-third of the school day; for salary supplements for department chairmen; for consultants, additional professional materials, and professional personnel on the system level to assist in in-service sessions; and for visits by department chairmen to exemplary education programs.

The library program is an essential part of this project. The head librarian has been designated as a department chairman; a second person has been added to each school library staff to release the library department chairman to work with all subject area chairmen

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and teachers, and to participate in in-service activities; outstanding library leaders have served as consultants for library department workshops; and selected groups of library department chairmen have visited schools in which experimental library programs are in operation. On the system level there has been extensive use of professional materials by all subject area departments in workshops and departmental meetings. The first evaluation of this project indicates that it is more than fulfilling the objectives that were set up in the proposal. Its effect on the secondary school library program has been phenomenal. Increased service to teachers and students; more cooperative planning for selection, use, and evaluation of all library materials; unusual arrangements for classroom and resource center loans; regularly scheduled teacher-librarian conferences; experimental arrangements for instruction in the use of library resources; broadened understandings in staff utilization; and critical evaluation of non-print materials—these are a few of the tangible results.

Recently elementary school teachers and librarians have been re-examining library schedules. As the work loads of elementary school librarians have been lightened, it has been possible to arrange for blocks of unscheduled time and to allow more frequent book exchange time. Some schools still have regularly scheduled library periods; but many schools are trying out different plans—a completely unscheduled program in the fourth through the seventh grades; large blocks of time for sixth and seventh grades; large group instruction on grade levels to make time available for small groups and individual use; and an alternate weekly schedule which permits free use of the library in all other open periods each day. These variations in schedules place more responsibility on classroom teachers to plan meaningful library experiences, but they mean also that richly rewarding experiences related to classroom instruction are resulting and that more guidance is being given to individual pupils. The leadership of the principal is one of the most important factors in these changes in library schedules. As a result of more flexible schedules, regularly scheduled teacher-librarian conferences have evolved in several of the schools.

The standards and the evaluation procedures of the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges have influenced the development of library services in Fulton County. Notably, the recent self-study in which all elementary schools have engaged in preparation for accreditation by the association stimulated extensive professional

reading by all school faculties and increased the services which local school librarians rendered to teachers. The school and system level reports revealed forcefully that the library program is interrelated with the total educational program; and at the same time, these reports offered opportunities to examine beliefs, strengths, and needed improvements in all elements of the library program.

At this point, it seems appropriate to consider the effect of supervision on the development of the school library program in Fulton County over twenty-seven years.

Writing in *Library Trends*, Mae Graham delineated the value of county-wide supervision in this way:

The benefits of the county-wide system are administrative, instructional, and economic. Each unit has a single board of education to make policies and a single superintendent to carry them out. Policies apply equally to large and small, urban or rural schools. Supervision can be provided more easily and economically for all schools, even the small ones. The principal economic advantages are that there is a broader tax base on which to operate, and the purchasing of supplies and materials can be consolidated.

The school library program profits accordingly. Policies, standards, and practices for school library development for all schools in a system can be discussed with one superintendent and board of education staff.⁴

All of the above benefits have been evident in the development of the Fulton County program. Specifically, concern on the part of the superintendent and instructional supervisor, and enthusiasm and cooperation on the part of patrons led to early recognition of the need for a supervisor to whom the board of education could delegate administrative responsibility for school library development. Another factor that has contributed to the successful development of a program has been the continuity in supervision over the years. There are more tangible advantages to the system: (1) library quarters are planned in line with uniform specifications, (2) central purchasing results in substantial savings, (3) the local collections of library materials are more carefully selected, (4) central cataloging and processing of many materials gives the librarians more time to work with students and teachers, (5) the libraries in new schools are ready for operation upon the opening of the schools, and (6) the morale and professional attitude of the librarians is very high as a result of learning and working together under the guidance of a supervisor.

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Many of the descriptions used in telling the "Fulton County Story" point up the fact that school library supervision is a leadership service, and that by assuming definite leadership responsibilities, the supervisor can provide vitality, economical coordination, and less duplication in the total program. In summary, these leadership responsibilities include:

Interpreting the need for school library personnel; identifying and recruiting library personnel; providing orientation and in-service experiences for librarians and other teachers; preparing budget requests; planning school library quarters and equipment; encouraging experimental programs and action research; coordinating library services with the programs of all departments; providing guidance in the selection and acquisition of all library materials; administering all centralized services, including the professional library and centralized cataloging; preparing pertinent reports; participating in community projects relating to the library program and the school system; coordinating the school library services with other library agencies; and evaluating the effectiveness of the library program.

Conscientious assumption of these major responsibilities contributes to the improvement of the quality of school library services; and it fosters the concept "that a strong central library serving as an instructional materials center is the keystone of quality education in each school, regardless of size or organization of the school."⁵

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