



## The Lansing, Michigan, Program

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THE BOARD OF EDUCATION of the Lansing School District, the administration, the teaching staff, and indeed the entire community, believe that quality education requires a library and a program of library service, directed by a trained librarian, in every school building. More than twenty years ago central libraries were established in the elementary schools; there were already well-established programs in the secondary schools. In the intervening years a library has been included in each new school building, and space has been found for one in every school which has been annexed to the school district. Starting with a small staff and a supervisor, the program has now grown to a staff of fifty-four trained school librarians and a director.

The preceding statements are but one reason why Lansing has an excellent school system and why the community is a good place in which to live. Strategically located in the center of the southern part of the lower peninsula of Michigan, Lansing is easily accessible to all parts of the state. In addition to being the state capital, it has many industries; many of them are automobile suppliers to the General Motors plants—notably Oldsmobile—in the city. It is also in the immediate area of one of the nation's leading institutions of higher learning, Michigan State University. The city has also shown remarkable growth in recent years as a shopping center for a tri-county area.

For the school year 1966-67 there were fifty-eight public schools in the Lansing School District, which extends beyond the city limits. There were fifty elementary schools with an enrollment of 18,969, five junior high schools with an enrollment of 6,758, and three senior high schools with an enrollment of 5,847, making a total enrollment of 31,574 students. There has been a steady increase in enrollment

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since the school year 1961-62, when the total enrollment was 26,500. The increase has been due in part to the annexation of small districts in the suburban areas, but the city itself has shown gradual population growth.

The Department of School Libraries is a part of the Department of Instruction, and the Director of School Libraries is directly responsible to the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. The Department of Instruction includes the directors of the following departments: elementary education, secondary education, adult education, pupil personnel, curriculum development, special education, and school libraries. A member of the staff of the College of Education of Michigan State University also meets with this group, serving as a consultant. The staff meets twice a month; its major function is to coordinate all phases of the instructional program. The Director of School Libraries also attends all meetings of both elementary and secondary principals, as well as the meetings of the general administrative staff.

The duties and responsibilities of the Director of School Libraries are as varied and numerous as time and energy permit. In addition to directing the total program, there are many facets of supervision included. A major part of the time is spent, for instance, in visiting the schools—not as an inspector, but to keep abreast of what is going on, to discover needs, to offer advice when needed, and to evaluate personnel. These visits are usually unscheduled, although many times they are the result of a request from the principal and/or the librarian, whose usual question is “How can we do better?” or “May we try something different?” Experimentation is always encouraged. Supervisory functions also include the holding of five regularly-scheduled staff meetings a year and the taking of time to listen to and talk with individuals concerning professional (and sometimes personal) problems. Staff leadership and professional growth are encouraged, and these supervisory functions are excellent ways to discover individual strengths and weaknesses.

Operational, or housekeeping, matters are many, necessary, and sometimes time-consuming. The budget must be spent; the orders must be consolidated and sent to vendors; furniture and equipment must be replaced periodically; libraries for new school buildings must be planned, equipped, and stocked with materials; inventory records must be kept; needed supplies must be furnished for each library; applicants must be interviewed; staff assignments must be made. The

list at times seems endless, but these activities are placed in their proper perspective when they are seen as a means to an end, and that end is the very best program of library service possible.

A central technical processing department is an invaluable adjunct to the school library program. The Director of School Libraries serves only in an advisory capacity to that department, however, since it also serves the Lansing Public Library, which operates under the direction of the Board of Education. In other words, it serves all school and public libraries in Lansing, including the local community college. Two-thirds of its work, however, is for the school libraries. Services received from this department include: sending out of all purchase orders; receiving and checking invoices; classification and cataloging; complete processing; and maintaining of union shelf list and author files. An addressograph machine is used in duplicating catalog and shelf list cards; the plate is also used for putting needed information on the book card and the book pocket. Major mending is also done in this department, and all materials are sent to the bindery from here. Weekly delivery is made to each school, with all materials ready to circulate when they arrive in the school library. The school librarian files the shelf list and catalog cards in that school's files. The services of a graphic artist are also available to all libraries: pictures are mounted here, and small signs are printed.

With a staff of trained librarians, and a belief that each school serves a unique faculty and student body, in the Lansing schools new materials are selected by the staff of each school. There is no book selection committee and no one list of recommended books. Current and basic book selection aids are available in each school library. In addition, a book evaluation center, consisting of review copies from publishers, is maintained in the Department of School Libraries, and librarians examine these and use them as another basis for selection. New books are ordered then only if they have been favorably reviewed or evaluated in one of the standard aids or if they have been personally examined by the librarian or by a teacher; this source must be noted on the order slip.

Orders for regular budget materials are placed five times a year: new ones in October, December, April, and June; duplicates and replacements in February only. This schedule has been established after experimentation and much staff discussion, and it seems to be working well. In addition, NDEA and ESEA materials are ordered when the money is made available. Two-part order slips are typed

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in each library, with the carbon copy being retained there for the outstanding order file; the original is sent to the Department of School Libraries office. Here all orders are then consolidated, and a six-part order slip is typed for each title. These, with the purchase order, are turned over to the order clerk, after the Director of School Libraries has decided on the vendor. A file of the original slip received from each school is maintained in the Department of School Libraries office, arranged by purchase order number. This serves as a check on errors in copying bibliographic information from the source, and these slips are kept only until the materials have been received. Another file is kept, arranged alphabetically by author, of one copy of the six-part order. This is used as a check on errors made in the technical processing department, as well as a help in selecting the vendor, since previous practices can be a guide.

As stated earlier, there is a central library in each school, and each school is served by a qualified librarian. "Qualified" in Lansing means a teacher's certificate and a minimum of a minor in library science. Applicants with master's degrees are given preference in employment; others are encouraged to take advantage of graduate extension courses offered in Lansing by the School of Librarianship of Western Michigan University or to obtain graduate work elsewhere. At the present time approximately half of the school library staff do have master's degrees.

In the elementary schools there is one full-time librarian in each school with five hundred students and/or twenty classes; in the smaller schools a librarian is assigned to two schools. There are two librarians for each junior and senior high school; if the enrollment is larger than two thousand, an additional librarian is provided. During the school year 1966-67 there were fifty-four school librarians, including four who have been employed under Title I of ESEA. These four work half-time in the Lansing elementary school libraries and half time in the local parochial school libraries. Non-professional help is provided as the need arises and as the budget permits; it may come from co-op students (high school seniors who attend school for half the day and work for the other half), pages, or adult clerks. A roster of school library substitutes is maintained, and these are assigned by the substitute office of the school district, as are regular teacher substitutes, in case of an absence. Assignments are made by the Director of School Libraries, with the approval of the school principal. Requests for transfer are honored if approved by the principals involved,

and each librarian is given the opportunity to ask for a change of assignment each year.

There is at least one school librarian on each of the system-wide curriculum committees. All members of the steering committees are volunteers. In most subject areas there is one committee for the elementary schools and one for the secondary. These committees meet at least once a month during the school year, and periodically the school librarians report to the entire library staff on their activities. In this way each is kept up to date on such matters as textbook adoption, changes in present curricular offerings, and pilot programs and new offerings.

The program of library service in each school is organized to meet the needs of that particular building. There are some few general procedures and policies which are followed by every school library, but the program itself will vary from school to school. The following policies are representative of those which relieve the librarians of some traditional routines and give them more time to spend with the children and teachers:

- (1) No fines are charged for overdue books. Instead, a program of good citizenship is carried on throughout all grades, and students are taught respect for public property. Replacement costs are charged, however, for lost or damaged materials.
- (2) Circulation records are not kept. It was found that no one had ever asked for this information, and permission was granted to discontinue collecting it. There was uniform agreement that the number of books going out the door is no valid criterion for evaluating a program; the need now is to find qualitative criteria.
- (3) A yearly inventory is not taken in the individual school libraries. A record of additions and withdrawals is maintained by the technical processing department, and the Director of School Libraries keeps this record on file.
- (4) No library is ever closed while school is in session.

Other general policies which relate to the librarian and his work with the child are:

- (1) The program extends from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Kindergarteners come to the school library from the beginning of their school experience and are encouraged to take books from the library for their parents to read to them.
- (2) There are few restrictions on the number of books a child may

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take from the library at any one time. In most cases he may take as many as he needs.

- (3) Instruction in the use of the library is given informally in all grades. Many techniques and many audio-visual materials are used, but there are no formal lessons with answer sheets. Current interests as well as current instructional programs are used as a starting point for some kind of what might be called "quickie" instruction. The librarians try, especially in the upper grades and in the secondary schools, to have a concentrated program of instruction just prior to a special project or a term paper. Each one uses his own ingenuity and creativity in presenting the material necessary to make the child a user of books and libraries.

In most elementary schools the library program has been one in which a strict schedule is adhered to, with each teacher bringing his class to the library at a given time and day each week. With the increase in staff and the adoption of a policy that each librarian should serve approximately five hundred students, it has been possible to broaden the program and provide what some teachers at first called "free time" for the librarian—time when there is no class on the schedule. They have since learned that this is the time when students may come to the library individually or as groups and the librarian will be able to help them with specific problems or needs. It has now caught on so well that many librarians find they have no time at all which could be called "free." Experiments in flexible scheduling are now being carried on in several of the elementary school libraries; they are being carefully watched and evaluated. It has been found that some teachers are reluctant to change their habits, but with a little patience on the part of the librarians it is anticipated that the advantages and values of a flexible program will outweigh the objections of these few teachers.

Secondary school libraries are used by class groups and by individual students. Teachers bring their classes to the library as the need arises, and they arrange for the visit ahead of time, informing the library staff of the purpose of the visit in order that materials will be available. Most of the libraries can accommodate two class groups plus individual students at the same time.

All school libraries now have facilities for housing and circulating all kinds of non-book materials, in addition to the traditional books, magazines, and pamphlets. Many of these libraries are functioning as materials centers in the broadest sense; others do not have the neces-

sary space requirements. New buildings, however, are being planned with functional quarters. At the present time each secondary school has an audio-visual coordinator who has some released time from teaching assignments. In the elementary schools with full-time librarians, the librarian serves as the media specialist. There is also one teacher who assists all schools in their instructional media programs, and he makes it a point to visit the librarian each time he is in a school, to see if any help is needed.

Audio-visual equipment is available in every school. In most schools this equipment is housed in the library quarters if there is ample space. Title II has now made it possible to provide the materials, or "soft ware," in the school libraries to use with this "hardware." The fact that the teachers were involved in selection has assured their use, which is gratifying.

There is a central Audio-Visual Department for the school district, housing and circulating materials which it is not economically feasible to place in all schools. This center also maintains all equipment used by the schools. The consultant in audio-visual aids and the Director of School Libraries work together very closely in coordinating the media program, with regular consultations and cooperative planning. One specific evidence of this cooperation can be seen in the placing of film strip viewers, record players with multiple earphones, single-concept film projectors, and study carrels in the elementary as well as the junior and senior high school libraries. Quarters in new school buildings are planned jointly by these two departments; a final name for these new quarters has not been decided on as yet, but they will be the center for all instructional materials and equipment, not just a library or an audio-visual center. At this point it is felt that the name is not as important as the developing of a functional program.

For the school year 1960-61 the budget for the purchase of library books was \$1.00 per pupil. It has been steadily increased each year until, for the school year 1966-67, it is \$4.85 per pupil. This figure includes the amount received from ESEA. From local funds alone it is \$3.28. In addition, separate allocations are provided for the purchase of magazines, supplies, furniture and equipment. More than half the school libraries have more than ten books per pupil; the average is a little over seven. Weeding takes place constantly, in order to assure an up-to-date collection in good condition.

The present program of library service is above average; in fact, it is far superior to that in many school districts. But there is still

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much room for improvement. The immediate needs might be identified as:

- (1) Increased budget. There is never enough money to buy all the materials needed or to keep up with current publications. Special programs, such as team teaching and the ita (initial teaching alphabet) reading program, make special demands on the resources over and above the regular needs.
- (2) Increased staff. Great progress has been made in providing librarians for the schools, but it is hoped that in the near future the standard of one librarian for each three hundred students can be met. Additional non-professional help is needed also—clerks, technicians, or paraprofessionals, and the aim is to have one for each forty teachers.
- (3) Adequate facilities. Most existing school buildings were built with no provision for adequate space to house instructional materials programs. Remodeling will be necessary if they are to have functional programs.
- (4) Programming. An acceptance of the flexible scheduling program is needed in all elementary school libraries.

Looking into a crystal ball is exciting, but planning and dreaming for the future are equally so. It is highly possible that within the next few years there will be, in Lansing, a central source for the selection of video and/or audio programs and electronic facilities to provide easy access to materials from other schools or agencies in the area. One high school now has a closed-circuit television program; this will in all probability be installed in the other secondary schools. Microfilming of all types of materials will appear in the school libraries. Electronics is here to stay; let us hope that its use will be to improve learning and teaching.