Horace Mann devoted his annual report for 1839 as Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education to the subject of books and libraries. Concerned about the availability of good reading materials for the young, he lamented that the private stock of books in Massachusetts was completely inadequate. The homes of the poor, if any books were to be found in them at all, contained only the Scriptures and some school texts. The homes of the rich, with a few notable exceptions, were likely to offer either "elegantly-bound" annuals or "novels of recent emissions." It was clear, Mann said, that "whatever means exist, then, either for inspiring or for gratifying a love of reading in the great mass of the rising generation, are to be found, if found at all, in public libraries."¹

By "public" libraries, Mann meant town, social or district libraries:

In the general want of private libraries, therefore, I have endeavored to learn what number of public libraries exist; how many volumes they contain, and what are their general character, scope, and tendency....nothing could have greater interest or significance, than an inventory of the means of knowledge, and the encouragement to self-education, possessed by the present and the rising generation.²

After corresponding with school committees and "intelligent men" in every town in Massachusetts, Mann ascertained that the "public" libraries in the state had about 300,000 volumes, but that only about

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100,000 persons (one-seventh of the state's population) had any right of access. Furthermore, these 300,000 library volumes were for the most part unsuitable for the moral and intellectual needs of the young. There were too many history books which dealt only with war and destruction, and far too many novels which offered nothing intellectually substantial.

Good books — treatises on government, philosophy, education, economics, science, and the application of science to the useful arts — were crucial for a proper education. "Let good books be read," Mann thundered, "and the taste for reading bad ones will slough off from the minds of the young, like gangrened flesh from a healing wound." Books, the right books, could supplant "gaming, shows, circuses, theatres, and many low and gross forms of indulgence." Each schoolhouse, if properly provided with good books and good teachers, could be made "luminous and radiant, dispelling the darkness, and filling the land with a glory infinitely above regal splendor."³

Such evangelical rhetoric was common among school and library promoters; indeed, the period of reform in which public schools spread across the land was called "the educational revival" even at that time. A largely indifferent, if not hostile, populace had to be converted to the cause of tax-supported public schools as the way to personal and social salvation. As Mann wryly wrote:

When I devote not a little time to preparation, and then visit a place and strive to expound the great subject of education, and labor, and preach, and exhort, and implore, I seem to myself as if I were standing, on some wintry day, with the storm beating upon me, ringing the door bell of a house that no one lives in, or perhaps the dwellers are all sound asleep, or too much absorbed in their own minds to hear the summons of one who comes to tell them that a torrent from the mountains is rushing down upon them.⁴

In attempting to discuss the historical relationship of American libraries to elementary and high school education, one must deal in general with the history of American reform movements. The reason is simple: public schools and libraries were the products of movements for social reform. They were viewed by their advocates as gateways to moral and social progress. They were planned as bulwarks of traditional republican virtues against new cultural patterns regarded as potentially dangerous. In an age of social decline (which is how reformers like Horace Mann and Henry Barnard perceived pre-Civil War America, how the
Progressives perceived post-Civil War America), children had to be rescued from bad influences in the streets and at home. The public schools were to forge a new moral order by forming children properly; the graduates of the public schools, morally and intellectually prepared for citizenship, would themselves carry on with their education in the new school district or public libraries.

Not so long ago, the mere chronological accounts of the growth and expansion of institutions such as public schools and public libraries were offered as self-evident proofs of progress and improvement in American life. Historians of education, teaching mostly in normal schools and departments of education, presented the proliferation of public schools in America as an integral part of the "march of progress." Historians of public and school libraries, teaching in library schools, presented the expansion of their favorite institutions in similar fashion. Such "house history" accounts, inspirational in tone and impoverished in historical understanding, were curiously disconnected from all those social processes which make so intricate and so fascinating the study of American reform movements: urbanization, industrialization, racism, sexism, mass immigration, politics, class antagonisms, religious hatreds, bureaucratization, and the rise of professionalism.

Since the late 1950s, the writing of American educational history has undergone an enormous change. Established historians, who had previously paid little attention to education as an area of investigation, began to examine the field in connection with intellectual, social and family history; they deplored much of what had been published earlier and suggested new approaches. Professor Bernard Bailyn of Harvard University, for example, commented in an influential 1959 essay:

The main emphasis and ultimately the main weakness of the history written by the educational missionaries... derived directly from their professional interests.... They spoke of schools as self-contained entities whose development had followed an inner logic and an innate propulsion.... To these writers the past was simply the present writ small.... they took their task to be the tracing of the careers of the institutions, ideas, or practices they knew so well. They had no capacity for surprise.... Cubberley [Professor Elwood Cubberley of Stanford University] and the others told a dramatic story, of how the delicate seeds of the idea and institutions of "public" education had lived precariously amid religious and other old-fashioned forms of educa-
Historians of education who had disputed such "burning" questions as whether the appearance of public education in seventeenth-century America should be attributed to the Puritans or the New York Dutch, Bailyn continued, had quite missed the point. "Public education as it was in the late nineteenth century, and is now, had not grown from known seventeenth-century seeds; it was a new and unexpected genus."8

Another of Bailyn's basic criticisms of histories such as Cubberley's much-used *Public Education in the United States* (1919) was that their authors had treated education as synonymous with formal pedagogy. Education, Bailyn urged, should rather be thought of as "the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across generations."7 Formal institutions might be important in some periods, insignificant in others. School history, properly treated, is a significant chapter in nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectual and institutional history; however, many other topics are important as well — and more important for earlier periods. Bailyn suggested that any reasonably comprehensive treatment of the history of American education would require that studies be done on such topics as family structure, English developments directly relevant to early American education (e.g., dissenting academies, missionary societies, charity schools), literacy, apprenticeship, cultural leaders, teachers, printers, etc. "Writings on the books and libraries of the colonial and Revolutionary periods abound," Bailyn noted.

*But books and libraries are in themselves mute and unyielding sources for cultural history,* for though it is obviously important simply to know what is available and desired in print, the critical question is what the reading material meant to its possessors and readers, what was derived from it, whether and how it made a difference.... Only by using the materials available on books and libraries together with the personal records that indicate their reception can one hope to deal with such basic questions as the nature of American provincialism in the colonial period. (italics added)8

Young historians of education, impressed by critiques such as Bailyn's and also dismayed by present-day practices and conditions in American public schools, began to question the standard accounts of origin and development provided in the texts used in the teachers' colleges. They embarked on new studies of schooling in America and found substantial
evidence to show that the old rose-colored tale of the rise of public school education was demonstrably false. Class and race biases, they maintained, had been woven into the basic structure of the public school system, had persisted for more than a century, and were proving impossible to eradicate. Moreover, modern public school systems had not, as their supporters proudly claimed, been separated from the political sphere in the higher interest of the common good; rather, one political group (professionals, businessmen, city managers, school superintendents) had taken over control from another (ward bosses, district school boards, immigrant groups).

Meanwhile, new general works on American reform movements suggested that the idealistic visions of the reformers — those visions expressed so handsomely in speeches and writing — might best be viewed as a set of reactions or responses to the incredibly rapid changes being wrought in nineteenth-century American society by industrialization, urbanization and mass immigration. The historian John Higham wrote in a 1969 essay:

Certainly the need for a stabler, more distinctly organized environment first arose in the cities. It was there that the shock of mass immigration in the 1840s and 1850s created intense alarm over the breakdown of ethnic homogeneity. It was in those chaotically growing centers of population also that the necessity for new public initiatives in sanitation, public health, education, and law enforcement was first felt. In the big cities, for example, uniformed professional police forces under a hierarchy of officers developed more or less simultaneously with the standardization and integration of public school systems under powerful superintendents.9

A similar theme for a later period was propounded by Robert H. Wiebe in *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*. The post-Civil War social challenges posed by industrialization, urbanization and immigration, he argued, were ultimately met by a new middle class comprising two groups: (1) urban professionals (in fields such as law, medicine, economics, administration, social work, architecture, and education); and (2) specialists in business, labor and agriculture. The members of the new class, Wiebe maintained, were characterized by a "conscientiousness of unique skills and functions, an awareness that came to mold much of their lives. ... They demonstrated it by a proud identification as lawyers or teachers, by a determination to improve the contents of medicine or the procedures of a particular business, and by an eagerness to join others
like themselves in a craft union, professional organization, trade association, or agricultural cooperative. This emerging urban middle class (to which librarians certainly belonged) developed a new set of values based on what Wiebe termed a "bureaucratic orientation." Its members sought solutions to social problems in systems, institutions, administration, scientific management, proper procedures, professional expertise, and sound professional training.

Members of the new middle class spoke a common language. . . . Moreover, they increasingly met each other in broad areas of mutual concern. Joining doctors in the public health campaigns, for example, were social workers, women's clubs, and teachers who specialized in the problems of youth; lawyers who drafted the highly technical bills; chambers of commerce that publicized and financed pilot projects; and new economists such as John B. Andrews, whose exposure of "phossy jaw" among the workers in phosphorus-match factories remains a classic in the history of public health.

The older local, small-town American outlook eventually gave way before the energies and goals of the new urban middle class, a value shift reinforced by the development of professionalism, bureaucracy and industrial technology.

The history of elementary and high school education in the United States, when viewed within this context of "the search for order," becomes in large part the examination of the rationalization and systematization of schooling. Who pushed for school expansion and why? Who opposed such expansion and why? The big city school systems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are spotlighted rather than the New England villages of an earlier period. The rhetoric of the reformers is viewed skeptically (for example, the claim that they were "above politics") — not so much with the notion that the reformers were insincere as that they were basically conservative, often incredibly culture-bound and narrow, and yet certain that they knew what was best for everyone else. The objects of their reform activity (primarily Catholics and immigrants), as well as their political opponents (primarily the ward bosses), are being looked at with interest. A much richer history of American education is the result. Recently-published studies on the history of American elementary and high school education are emphatically not about the progressive unfolding of the "sacred seeds" of the public school.

No comprehensive single history in the new style has appeared as
yet; however, three books taken together present a fairly good account of nineteenth-century developments. They are: *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America*, by Michael B. Katz; *Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870-1915*, by Marvin Lazerson; and *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*, by David B. Tyack. Katz is concerned primarily with the emergence of an educational bureaucracy in Boston between 1850 and 1884; Lazerson deals with the ways in which late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century schoolmen tried to integrate the schools into an environment profoundly changed by industrialism and urbanization; and Tyack concentrates on the consolidation of rural schools in the 1890s and 1900s, but also summarizes many of the other educational developments of the period.

Excellent source materials are contained in a fourth work, a massive 3-volume collection of documents on American children and youth. The editor, Robert H. Bremner, concentrates on the development of American public policies toward children. The documents he includes are organized under topics such as health, labor, juvenile delinquency, and the special problems of black, Indian and immigrant children. Large sections of each volume are devoted to education, and there is even a brief chapter on public libraries under one of the education sections.

A fifth study, by David J. Rothman, does not deal with ordinary schools at all, but contains a wealth of information on the ideas and activities of those reformers who promoted such nineteenth-century institutions as the penitentiary, the insane asylum, the almshouse, the orphan asylum, and the house of refuge or reformatory. As Carl Kaestle commented in a perceptive review of Rothman's book and its relation to the history of education, "schools, like asylums, were part of a general trend, the institutionalization and rationalization of reform efforts designed to solve social problems that, in an earlier and simpler society, had been handled in an ad hoc manner through personal contacts." Similar in many respects to an asylum, the urban elementary school of the antebellum period:

was a regimented organization designed to teach order, sobriety, frugality, and industry to children, especially the children of the poor and the immigrants, who were considered deviants from the native, middle-class culture. School promoters saw the non-school environment of the children in negative terms, and it was hoped that the school would be a model for the larger society.
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The chief mission of the common school, Horace Mann said repeatedly, was the formation of character. The perilous state of American society in the 1840s and 1850s, however, made the reformation of character a necessity as well. "The vicious sentiments and noxious habits into whose midst so many children are born, and which, therefore, they imbibe as inevitably as they do their mother's milk; these," Mann wrote, "it is the sacred function of the Common School to extirpate and abolish."17 Or, as the Boston School Committee put it in 1858, the task involved "taking children at random from a great city, undisciplined, uninstructed, often with inveterate forwardness and obstinacy, and with the inherited stupidity of centuries of ignorant ancestors; forming them from animals into intellectual beings."18

Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, the two towering figures of nineteenth-century educational reform, promoted compulsory education and standardized tax-supported school systems as the only means for making certain that every child in the Republic received a proper moral and intellectual grounding in preparation for citizenship. Both admired the nationalized French and Prussian school systems; both saw opponents of similar proposals for the United States as obstructionist. On every side they saw the dangers of decentralization and division, parties and factions, the disintegration of the social order. The solution to a foundering society was to be found in the common school, which would catch every child when the seeds of good could still be planted, train decent American citizens, and thus unify the nation.

The struggle for "the one best system" of education, to use David Tyack's ironic phrase for public school bureaucracy and uniformity, went on throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. City school systems were rigidly organized along the lines of military or industrial models; certification and accreditation schemes were imposed; rural school districts were forced to consolidate; the educational bureaucracy flourished. In Cubberley's interpretation, these developments were clear signs of progress in the hard-fought battle against the forces of darkness. Those who were for the public schools, said Cubberley, were "'Citizens of the Republic,' Philanthropists and humanitarians,... Public Men of Large Vision,... the intelligent workingmen in the cities,... [and] 'New England men.'" Against the public school — Cubberley's enemies — were "the old aristocratic class,... politicians of small vision,... the ignorant, narrow-minded and penurious,... [and] the non-English-speaking classes."19

For Tyack, Katz and a new generation of historians, a dichotomy such as the one Cubberley drew is ridiculous and serves only to emphasize
the prejudices and biases typical of the public school promoters. The diverse character of American society, they contend, was ill-served by the move to create a standardized and bureaucratized educational system.

Amid the pluralistic politics of interest groups, the cultural conflicts of Catholic and Protestant, immigrant and nativist, black and white, the position of schoolmen was an anomalous one. For the most part, they held a common set of WASP values, professed a common-core (that is, pan-Protestant) Christianity, were ethnocentric, and tended to glorify the sturdy virtues of a departed rural tradition. They took their values as self-evidently true — not subject to legitimate debate... they normally shared Horace Mann’s dislike for partisan controversy in either politics or religion.20

Mann could never comprehend, for example, why Jews objected to the opening of the school day with a reading from the King James Bible.

As city populations burgeoned and the numbers of foreign-born grew, school administrators became more convinced that increased supervision and tighter controls in the classroom were a necessity.

Operating from the twin assumptions that only rigid controls could manage the seething city masses and that only specific immutable programs of instruction, uniformly applied to every child in every classroom, could produce specific, immutable social results, urban administrators late in the 19th century articulated their model environment in such detail and with such obvious intentions of freezing a fluid society that at times they were able to create the horror of lock-step routine.21

Before the Civil War, only Massachusetts had a compulsory attendance law. After the Civil War, state after state adopted such a law. Fear for the stability of the city — a fear engendered by the effects of industrialization, immigration and urbanization — fueled the drive for truancy statutes and truant officers. As Henry J. Perkinson noted: “The city child, especially the child of the newcomers, had generated both compassion and fear... He was in need of help. But he was also a threat... a threat to social customs, mores, and institutions, a threat to the future of American democracy.”22 The secretary of Connecticut’s State Board of Education, for example, argued in 1872 that the great influx of the “foreign element” had so changed the state of society as to require the passage of a compulsory education law.
The number of ignorant, vagrant and criminal youth has recently multiplied to an extent truly alarming in some of our cities. Their depravity is sometimes defiant and their resistance to moral suasion is obstinate. . . . let the law take them in hand, first to the public school, then to the Reform School.

Elementary school enrollments increased dramatically as a result of the compulsory education laws—so did school personnel. To handle the large numbers of children as well as increased amounts of money, superintendents had to have clerks, assistant principals and principals. Classrooms were graded so that order might more easily be maintained; teachers began to specialize. By the turn of the century, the city schools were both systematized and, in the sense that teachers and administrators throughout the country shared ideals and followed similar practices, nationalized. It was in partial resistance to the new state uniformity that the Roman Catholics set up parochial school systems.

Common school and public library were firmly linked in the minds of those who supported the establishment of these institutions. As Sidney Ditzion has documented, innumerable reports and speeches contained the message that the public library would carry on where the public school left off. Joshua Bates, who gave $50,000 to Boston to buy books for the new public library, felt sure that library would "be carrying out the school system of Boston as it ought to be carried out." The introduction to the massive 1876 U.S. Bureau of Education report on public libraries began: "For forty years the importance of public libraries as auxiliaries to public education has been recognized and dwelt upon by American educators wherever common schools have flourished." In the first chapter of that report, Horace E. Scudder wrote: "The idea of a free public library could hardly find general acceptance until the idea of free public education had become familiar." William I. Fletcher, author of chapter 18, stated flatly that "the public library should be viewed as an adjunct of the public school system." Similarly, William F. Poole wrote in chapter 25: "It [the tax-supported public library] is the adjunct and supplement of the common school system. Both are established and maintained on the same principles—that general education is essential to the highest welfare of any people; and, considered simply as a question of political economy, it is better and cheaper, in the long run, to educate a community than to support prisons and reformatories." Speaking at an ALA meeting in 1883, Poole restated his conviction in even stronger terms:
Our Public Libraries and our Public Schools are supported by the same constituencies, by the same methods of taxation, and for the same purpose; and that purpose is the education of the people. For no other object would a general tax for the support of public libraries be justifiable. If public libraries shall, in my day, cease to be educational institutions, and serve only to amuse the people and help them to while away an idle hour, I shall favor their abolition.30

The failure of the early school district libraries (designed for use by adults in the district) only strengthened the public library movement. The demonstrated inability of school personnel to run libraries properly was an enormous boost to the early professionalization of librarians. The selection of good books for the elevation of taste and morals was not so easy, and the management of libraries required businesslike skills. The catalog of defects inherent in the establishment and administration of school district libraries was a lengthy one: inadequate funds, inadequate supervision, inadequate staff, operations restricted to short school terms, etc. School district libraries in Massachusetts, which owed their origin in 1837 to the campaigns of Horace Mann, were abandoned in 1850. In Michigan, where voters were empowered in 1837 to raise taxes for district libraries, the state superintendent reported in 1873 that the system had come into disfavor.

Public librarians saw themselves as a unique kind of educator, and they gradually worked out the ideology necessary to justify their institutions and their labors. They were the guardians of the "crowning glory of the public school system," the aiders and abettors of that crucial concept known as "self-education." What good was it to teach children to read unless they went on in life to read worthwhile things? The reading of good books could ensure a solid citizenry, a strong and stable Republic. Self-culture, self-education, self-help, library service for deserving adults — initially these were the key concepts for the promoters of public libraries, and such concepts rested on the foundation of common schools existing across the land.

In a period when the common school was devoted to the most rudimentary kind of rote instruction, when pupils attended for only a short period of time and then went out to work, when the emphasis was on the training of moral character rather than the stimulation of intellect, it was natural that public libraries were generally viewed as self-help institutions for adult education rather than as an integral part of elementary
school instruction. Schoolteachers were preoccupied with the daily drill and with classroom law and order; public librarians initially believed that their work began where the common schools stopped. Most public libraries in the late nineteenth century did not permit children under the age of twelve or fourteen access. And most classrooms, needless to say, bore little resemblance to Mann’s vision of luminosity, radiance and glory.

Whatever the high-minded philosophies that justified them, the schools of the 1890’s were a depressing study in contrast. Rural schools, built during the educational renaissance of the forties and fifties, had been allowed to fall into disrepair and disrepute. In the cities problems of sky-rocketing enrollments were compounded by a host of other issues. In school buildings badly lighted, poorly heated, frequently unsanitary, and bursting at the seams, young immigrants from a dozen different countries swelled the tide of newly arriving farm children. Superintendents spoke hopefully of reducing class size to sixty per teacher.31

The number of children who went on to secondary schools (academies or public high schools) was extremely small, and the dropout rate extremely high. Children over the age of fourteen were, of course, not subject to compulsory education laws. Between 1890 and 1900, high school enrollments began to increase, but calculations based on census reports of the period indicate that only 8.4 percent of the fourteen- to seventeen-year-old group attended public high schools. Only a fraction of this small group stayed until graduation. If private school enrollments for the period are added, the total enrollment was still only 10.2 percent of the eligible age group.32 It was not at all unreasonable, then, for public librarians to think of their institutions as people's colleges — as places of opportunity for those pious, deserving, studious souls who wanted more education but had to work. Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard, was known to have said that a 5-foot “shelf would hold books enough to afford a good substitute for a liberal education to anyone who would read them with devotion.”33 The publication of The Harvard Classics in 1910 was grounded in Eliot’s faith in the power of self-education.

All along there were those who urged that public schools and public libraries work directly together. The historian Charles Francis Adams, Jr., for example, told the teachers of Quincy, Massachusetts in 1876 that “though the school and the library stand on our main street side by side, there is ... no bridge leading from the one to the other.”34 Teachers, he
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said, should use public library books as a supplement to class studies. William I. Fletcher asked that public libraries abolish their age restrictions so as to influence the young as early as possible. Samuel Swett Green of the Worcester Public Library worked out a series of techniques in the 1880s for promoting cooperation between his library and the public schools—techniques which attracted considerable attention and emulation. In 1896, at the request of Melvil Dewey, the National Education Association established a Library Section.

Gradually the belief caught on that public librarians, as educators, could not merely hope that adults might wander in, but would have to engage in direct educational activities for children. "Must we wait," Minerva Sanders of the Pawtucket (Rhode Island) Public Library asked in 1887, "until our children (for they are all ours as a community) are fourteen years of age or upwards before we begin to teach them the first principles of right living, of mental growth, of love to their neighbor?"

During the 1890s the practice of setting up special rooms or areas in public libraries for the use of children began and quickly spread. Library journals of the period report that such special areas were so quickly overrun by children that the great need for children's services could be appreciated by all. Perhaps the ultimate judgment on the new rooms was uttered by John Cotton Dana in evaluating the two-year-old service to children of his own Denver Public Library: "It looks to be a helpful institution. It is a manifest improvement on the city street corner."

Certainly, the new specialists who quickly emerged to take over the children's rooms were committed to the creed of direct education for children in the public library. Through story hours, reading clubs and the careful selection of the "best" literature, these children's librarians hoped to introduce their young charges to beauty and idealism, to wean them away from dime novels and similar "trash." A great deal of rhetoric was expended on these noble ideals—rhetoric which at points resembled the speeches and reports of Horace Mann, and at others was more akin to the romantic ideas about children which characterized the kindergarten movement.

This combination of two rather disparate conceptions, i.e., romanticism with regard to young children, and early childhood education as a type of urban social reform, marked both the kindergarten and children's library services movements. The child was seen as an innocent, playful creature who could reach perfection if given the right surroundings (the kindergarten, the public library children's room); at the same time, the child was a conduit for reaching the poor and improving their way of life.
"Through the child," Marvin Lazerson has written, "the poor would be taught how to raise their children. They would be introduced to cleanliness and health standards, the English language, and proper behavior patterns. The kindergarten would thus assimilate parents and child, bringing social harmony to family life in the slum."  

Elizabeth Peabody, who began the kindergarten movement in the United States, emphasized the importance for the child of love and understanding. She sought to eliminate corporal punishment and rote learning; at the same time, she made clear that "socialization" was the overall goal of kindergarten training. Like most urban reformers, kindergarten advocates thought that the city was a poor environment for natural growth. The kindergarten was designed in part to bring rural virtues to city tots. Such devices as nature walks and small gardens, for example, were ardently promoted. The kindergarten, the editor of *Century Magazine* declared in 1903, was: "our earliest opportunity to catch the little Russian, the little Italian, the little German, Pole, Syrian, and the rest and begin to make good citizens of them.... The whole family comes under the influence of what I may call the kindergarten charm.... The social uplift is felt — first, by the child; second, by the family; and third, by the neighborhood."

One can find plenty of evidence in the writings of children's librarians both of the romantic conception of the child and the belief that everyday life could be elevated through literature. Anne Carroll Moore of the New York Public Library wrote passionately of the importance of the child's heart and feelings. Poetry, fairy tales and myths, she felt, were the key elements in reaching and understanding the child, and she inveighed against the prosaic, fact-oriented outlook of so many parents and teachers: "Dreams, fancies, humor, are the natural heritage of childhood," she wrote, "and are the foundation of what is beautiful and poetical in literature, art, and human experience." Moore tried hard to recall her own childhood feelings so that she could utilize the memories in her work. One of her best-known books, in fact, begins with her recollection of riding with her father down a rural road in Maine. Moore's conception of education was close to that of the kindergarten pioneers; her emphasis was on the beauty of stories and myths, never on prosaic instructional aids for the schoolroom (a schoolroom too oriented to facts in any case).

Linda A. Eastman, children's librarian at the Cleveland Public Library for many years, wrote in 1898:
It is a growing conviction in my own mind that the library, aside from its general mission, and aside from its co-operation with the schools in the work of education, has a special duty to perform for the city child. No one can observe city life closely without seeing something of the evil which comes to the children who are shut up within its walls; the larger the city the greater is the evil, the more effectually are the little ones deprived of the pure air, the sweet freedom of the fields and woods. ... For these the library must to some extent take the place of Mother Nature, for under present conditions it is through books alone that some of them can ever come to know her.\(^{41}\)

If the sentimentality of some of the early children's librarians seems in retrospect to be somewhat cloying, it is nonetheless appealing when compared with statements made by children's librarians who hit the urban reform trail more emphatically. Effie L. Power of the St. Louis Public Library, for example, stated in a 1914 pamphlet that "what children read depends very largely upon temperament and racial tendencies." When a Jewish child asked her why he could not get Horatio Alger stories in the library (the series was blacklisted), she interpreted his request as evidence of his "innate longing for success." It was a privilege, she said, "to find the books which will help turn it [i.e., his innate longing for success — obviously a Jewish trait in her mind] into right channels." German children, she continued, were "the most substantial and stable of foreigners; if not always the most picturesquely interesting," whereas Slavic children "seem stupefied and have no desire to better their condition."\(^{42}\)

Libraries inside of schools were few in the nineteenth century, and were in any case of little significance for schools characterized by mechanical drill and a literal "toeing of the mark." There were some exceptions, however. The legendary Francis W. Parker, for instance (at Quincy, Massachusetts in the 1870s and later at the Cook County Normal School in Illinois), stressed the child's individuality and the need for varied supplementary reading. On the whole, however, the picture was a dismal one. By the 1890s, it was clear to some observers that American public schools were a massive failure — prisons in which dreary exercises were carried out, factories running on rigid timetables. Beginning with Joseph Mayer Rice's scathing articles in *The Forum* in 1892, a series of reformers registered their pedagogical protests. It was the start of what the historian Lawrence A. Cremin termed "the transformation of the school."\(^{43}\) In two generations, he claimed, the character of the American school changed

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from oppressive factory to progressive institution. Cremin's optimistic account has been subject to considerable criticism; still, it is undeniably the case that school libraries were incorporated into school programs—in theory, if not always in practice—because of the new educational philosophies. Educators and librarians applauded in turn the Gary Plan, the Dalton Plan, the Winnetka Plan, the Project Method, the problem lesson, the laboratory method, supervised study, and a host of other innovations which were supposed to take child growth and individuality into account in planning learning experiences.

Again, historians such as Tyack and Katz question whether what actually happened in classrooms in any way matched the glowing rhetoric. The progressive slogan "meeting the needs of the child," for example, eventually became linked with intelligence testing and the resultant tracking in the classroom. The originally much-praised Gary platoon system turned out to be an application of business and factory money-saving practices to the elementary school. Nonetheless, the new educational philosophies engendered great interest both in expanding the use of books and libraries and in utilizing all kinds of instructional aids.

Thus, the famous third-grade study unit on boats, which was developed in the 1920s at the Lincoln School in New York City, involved building toy boats in industrial arts class; reading about the Vikings, Phoenicians and Egyptians for history; using pictures of boats along with charts, maps and globes for geography; visiting a museum to see early measuring devices used in boat-building for arithmetic; looking at pictures and models of boats for art; writing stories and poems about boats for literature; reading stories about boats and the sea for reading class; setting up flotation and balance experiments for science; writing and producing a play about Leif Ericson for drama; and singing boating songs for music. It is easy to imagine the films, filmstrips, phonograph records, tapes and other materials which would be added to such a curriculum today.

The Lincoln School (which was connected with Columbia University's Teachers College) was exceptional, of course. As Cremin points out, observers of American schools during the 1920s (such as the Lynds for Middletown and the German educator Erich Hylla for Die Schule der Demokratie) commented on the curious American amalgam of enthusiastic progressive rhetoric with traditional classroom practice and extensive school system bureaucratization. Yet, Cremin insists, progressivism did leave its "unmistakable imprint at a number of points," one of which was a change in the materials of instruction. "Textbooks became more colorful
and attractive, and supplementary devices like flash cards, workbooks, simulated newspapers, slides, filmstrips, and phonograph records were used in growing numbers.\(^{144}\)

In secondary education, progressivism played a part in bringing about the shift from academic preparatory schools for a small number to comprehensive institutions designed for all youths. There was an enormous expansion in the high schools of athletics programs, clubs, marching bands, and similar activities. New courses in trades, agriculture, home economics, physical education and the arts were added to the traditional curriculum. In his book on the development of American high schools, Edward A. Krug states that no one really knows what caused the increase in high school enrollments which began in the 1890s. Many factors have been cited; the most important of these are thought to have been the increase in urban populations, the growth in technology, and the strong drive toward economic advancement coupled with a belief that schooling was a way to get ahead. "Only rarely," Krug writes with gentle irony, "is the possibility suggested that more people thought schooling was a good thing in itself. This possibility is a remote one."\(^{145}\) Krug quotes with amusement a comment about Lady Jane Grey made by one Nellie Hattan Britan in a 1908 *Education* article entitled "What Physical Education Is Doing for Women." Lady Jane had been found reading Plato while her friends were hunting. When asked why she was not hunting, too, she replied that all sport was but a shadow to her pleasure in reading Plato. "If such a child were found today," Britan said approvingly, "I dare say she would be hurried off to a physician or a brain specialist." Krug says that "there was little room in the prevailing climate of American education after 1905 for those who preferred Plato to working on projects for improving the community."\(^{146}\)

On first consideration it seems curious that a turning away from classics and intellectual pursuits to more practical studies would be linked with an enormous expansion in instructional materials and an increased concern for how to house them. The fact is, however, that any widening of curriculum would necessarily be accompanied by new sets of instructional materials. Furthermore, as American high schools embraced an ever-greater segment of the population, more and more effort had to be expended on finding ways to attract and teach students who were not academically inclined. As early as 1920, when the Certain report on school library conditions done for the NEA was adopted by the ALA, high school libraries were urged to serve as centers and coordinating agencies for "all material used in the school for visual instruction, such as stereopticons,
portable motion picture machines, stereopticon slides, moving picture films, pictures, maps, globes, bulletin board material, museum loans, etc."47 Through the 1930s and 1940s, as technological developments in "audio-visual aids" continued, librarians discussed their uses and the role of the school library in housing and distributing them. By 1956 the American Association of School Librarians had thoroughly embraced the notion of the school library as an instructional materials center for films, recordings and "newer media," as well as for books.

It was the launching of Sputnik in 1957, however — with the resultant federal funds made available for the development and purchase of instructional materials — which officially sealed the change in the concept of the school library from culture-repository (primarily in the form of books) to active partner in curriculum and instruction (with a multi-media approach).48 What Ernest Roe has aptly termed "the demise of Betsy's library" took place conceptually in the schools. From the belief that their primary function was to encourage children to read books, school librarians moved to the view that their primary function was to back up the school curriculum with books and all other suitable materials. The factors contributing to the change, according to Roe, included "the reaction against the excesses of 'child-centered' education, reinforced by the impact of the first Sputnik, which accelerated the demand for more academic excellence, more attention to the rigorous disciplines (languages, mathematics, the physical sciences)." An instructional materials center geared with precision to the school curriculum, Roe went on to say, was "a special library, meeting the more and more highly specific needs of the institution it serves," and the public library, as a result, would have "to face the uncomfortable task of redefining its educational role."49

Throughout the literature on school libraries, there runs an undercurrent of disappointment. It is over the disparity between the idea of the school library (and the school librarian) as being at the hub of a creative instructional program, and the actuality — the school library has frequently had only a marginal role. The situation is not limited to the United States, either. Norman Beswick commented in discussing the effectiveness of English library resource centers in bringing about changes in curricular attitudes that:

One can look back at the history of the school library movement and wonder. At least in theory, secondary schools in England have had something called a school library since the end of the Second World War; in some authorities, notably what is now
Inner London, these libraries have been staffed by full-time chartered librarians, and often well stocked. Yet all too often, the impact of such libraries on the teaching-learning mode of the school has been modest: a little project work here, a half-hour's random foraging there ("Find a book and sit down quietly and read it"), a valiant effort at the development of recreational interests, the pushing of major children's fiction authors, and a new subject on the timetable called "Library." This was usually no fault of the librarians, chartered or otherwise; if the organization of service is not seen by teachers to offer them immediate advantages, and reflect the way in which they want to teach, it will remain peripheral and recreational. Many visitors to the United States will have seen gleaming multi-media centres stuffed with equipment and every sort of printed and audio-visual resource, and yet remaining equally marginal to the school.50

On various occasions the blame for the failure to reach the ideal has been laid on teachers, administrators, school librarians, or students (or all of them combined), or has been attributed to more abstract causes, such as "cultural deprivation." Media specialists have berated librarians for being too partial to print and too hostile to other information formats. Some librarians who are enthusiastic about media have accused the teachers of being too traditional. Other librarians insist that they are theoretically pro-media, but that there is a dearth of good materials. The debate appears to be endless and rather futile, perhaps because so many unstated premises about education are assumed by all participants. In general, however, it seems to have passed into the library literature that school libraries are now or should be media centers; further, school librarians have on the whole ceased to question the wisdom of this progression.

For criticism of the entire educational structure in which the media centers have emerged, one must turn either to conservative "back-to-basics" advocates or to radical antibureaucracy critics. James Herndon, for example, in his autobiographical account of junior high school teaching, criticized the entire public school enterprise — from curriculum and instruction to the running of the movie projectors. He also commented disparagingly on a "resource center" which he and three other teachers set up as part of a specially funded project to work with eighty "non-achievers" in five classrooms.
We decided that two of the rooms would be called Resource Rooms... We spent most of our three grand for resource-room materials—paints and clay and plaster and phonos and tape recorders and TVs and Bell telephone kits and games and puzzles—toys, so that while the kids were doing nothing they'd have something to do. Our main notion was that the kids didn't have to come to class unless they wanted to... What we were doing was offering the kids an intolerable burden.... They knew they ought to go to Writing or Science or Social Studies when it was offered, because that was what you were supposed to do at school, not just goof around scattering the parts of the Bell telephone kit around the resource room while the teacher in charge pretended he thought it was a fine thing to do.51

The next year, Herndon continues, he and the other teachers rethought the entire situation. “We decided,” he writes, “that we would teach reading because the kids couldn’t read well.” Reading, Herndon and his group felt, was not difficult to learn; it couldn’t possibly be. “Once you can look at C-A-T and get the notion that it is a clue to a certain sound, and moreover that very sound which you already know means that particular animal, then you can read.”52 The problem in the school, Herndon concluded, was that children had no chance to practice reading because they were always being taught “skills” which were not really reading and which never led to real reading. In Herndon’s view, the whole modern school apparatus of reading readiness, reading methods, reading tests, etc., actually interfered with the process of reading. A good reading class, he insisted, was when children sat down and read. “Resist the urge... to watch the kids all happily working in the workbooks and programmed materials... resist every day all the apparatus of the school.”53

The very idea of a school library or an instructional materials center—whether one is needed, what it should contain, how it should function—is inevitably linked to one’s fundamental conceptions of education. A professor at New Jersey’s Glassboro State College illustrated this nicely when he recently announced in a satirical article that Glassboro was not “a citadel of learning.” Why? “We have... no Library,” he wrote. “We have a learning resources center.”54

It is ironic that the chorus of educational criticism should have become so intense (and frequently so devastating) just at the time when American education, “viewed from the standpoint of nineteenth-century school reformers... had entered the promised land.”55 Beginning with
the New Deal, there were federal funds and programs for elementary and secondary education. Modest at first, federal programs expanded tremendously after the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, the Library Services and Construction Act in 1964, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965. In addition, a string of court decisions on integration forced changes in the traditional racist practices of many schools and libraries.

In reviewing the 1933-73 period in American education, Robert H. Bremner pointed out that:

A larger proportion of children and youth attended school for longer periods of time. School administration and organization were centralized through district consolidations with gains in efficiency and versatility. The status of teachers was remarkably improved. . . . Earnest and successful efforts were made to derive the content of school instruction from the most advanced knowledge in the different disciplines. . . . Underlying all was the increase in federal support. Until counter pressures developed in the late 1960s, the money resources available for education at all levels steadily rose. The entry of the federal government into the field of regular, permanent support for schools during the Johnson administration was a landmark. In all these respects, the years after the early 1930s were a culmination of earlier movements for the establishment of a complete system of national public education.66

As the historians of education were demonstrating, however, the standpoint of nineteenth-century school reformers no longer provided an acceptable frame of reference for examining either the past or present state of U.S. educational institutions. The shameful treatment of minorities, the persistence of segregation, the nightmare of McCarthyism, the hypocrisy (or ignorance) of school personnel in singing praises to democracy while encouraging uniformity and a mindless patriotism, the downplaying of cultural and intellectual activities in favor of a "life adjustment" or "training for citizenship" philosophy of education—all these defects which had somehow gone unnoticed became painfully noticeable. The most conservative of the economists, Milton Friedman, advocated a tuition voucher program as a means of stimulating private competition for the public school system. The most radical of the school critics, Ivan Illich, called for a "de-schooling" altogether.
Libraries, both public and school, have been intertwined with American elementary and high school education for more than a century. As noted earlier, educators such as Horace Mann sought to establish public libraries, and librarians such as William Poole clearly viewed public libraries as part of the educational enterprise. For library historians, one consequence of the recent work in the history of American education and of various American reform movements is that they can no longer start with the assumption that libraries are automatically to be praised. Is it the case, for instance, that the expansion of school libraries—from a few poorly stocked shelves to a multitude of modern resource centers—helped improve the quality of American education? That question was never asked so long as everyone assumed at the outset that “public school” and “school library” were “good things.”

A second consequence of the new work on history of education is that the complexity of that history—in contrast to the simple, straight-line stories of the earlier historians—must render one more sensitive to complexities in library history. Michael Harris has insisted that the new themes developed by the historians of education can be fastened wholesale onto the history of the American public library movement. Harris’s work has been exceedingly useful in pointing up the disparity between noble public statements and not-so-noble private beliefs, between idealized “house history” and often-squalid reality. His use of revisionist public-school history has been far too mechanically applied, however. The themes developed by Michael Katz, David Tyack and others work reasonably well for nineteenth-century development of the public library movement, but they are not satisfactory for understanding what has happened to public libraries in the twentieth century. The passage of the compulsory education laws created the essential difference between the two institutions. Public libraries, faced with the problem of enticing people into using their collections and services, moved away from nineteenth-century proclamations of what their goals were supposed to be. They came to resemble other organizations which sought clients on a voluntary basis rather than those institutions which dealt with a captive audience.

In a curious sense, the failure of public libraries to become the grandiose educational institutions envisioned by early supporters might be regarded today as having been in reality a positive outcome. Public libraries, struggling to maintain support and to become little islands of genteel “culture” in a rude industrial world, were hardly the repressive, juggernaut, “elitist” establishments which Harris makes them out to have been. They were not like the public schools, although their directors may
have wanted them to be. On the other hand, they were hardly “ arsenals of a democratic culture.” Their overall significance is still unknown, primarily because it is so much more difficult to assess the impact of books on individuals than it is to count the numbers of books on the shelves and to chronicle administrative growth.

Even some of the Progressives, in fact, were quite contemptuous of library work as a species of social reform. Herbert Croly spoke of “the credulity of the good American in proposing to evangelize the individual by the reading of books.”57 The economist E.A. Ross commented impatiently in 1914:

One way to divert the people from fundamentals is to get them hurrahing for petty betterments. I sometimes suspect that trivial social service is employed to sidetrack people from economic reform . . . those who start innocent charities get support and put them through; while those who promote movements that lessen somebody’s profits or dividends or rentals get the cold shoulder and fail. So that the promoters of social service learn the lesson: “Ask for reading rooms, or fresh air, or teddy-bears; don’t ask for less risk, or less hours, or for more pay, or more rights.”58

Both Croly and Ross, by the way, associated reading rooms and timid reform gestures with the role of American women as do-gooders.

It is sobering for librarians to think of the provision of books and reading rooms as “trivial social service” and “petty betterment.” They may take some comfort from the fact that all American reform movements have tended to be long on rhetoric and short in bringing about fundamental change. Why this should have been so is a question which some historians have attempted to answer. They wonder, for example, why all the passionate energy and rhetoric which poured into the Progressive movement resulted in so little genuine social achievement.

The United States remained far behind Europe in the field of social welfare. At the end of the progressive era, unskilled workers were still unorganized, poverty was still the lot of the majority of Americans, and, in spite of the income tax amendment, inequalities in the distribution of the national wealth remained essentially uncorrected.59

The ideologies of librarians and educators have been intimately linked. Public and school librarians, like professional school people, were participants in “the search for order.” Both groups worked diligently to
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organize educational facilities and social services for an urban, industrial nation. One is forced, therefore, by the recent critical studies in the history of education, to reexamine and to produce new library history within a much broader frame of reference. Libraries, like schools, were not "above" political, class, religious, and cultural conflicts. Librarians, like school professionals, were altogether too wedded to an exaggerated notion of their own importance and goodness. Perhaps the most salutary effect of the new picture of American education is that it stimulates one to ask about the real significance of libraries in the educational process.

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6. Ibid., p. 11.
8. Ibid., pp. 85-86.
11. Ibid., pp. 128-29.
16. Ibid., p. 221.
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27. Ibid., p. 1.


29. Ibid., p. 477.


38. Lazerston, op. cit., p. 36.


43. Cremin, op. cit.

44. Ibid., p. 307.

45. Krug, op. cit., p. 171.

46. Ibid., p. 282.

48. *Sputnik,* plus the huge increase in the number of students after World War II, also stimulated an expansion in public library services for teenagers. For a summary of these developments, see Simpson, Elaine. "Student Use of Public Libraries." In Emma Cohn and Brita Olsson, eds. *Library Services to Young Adults.* Copenhagen, Bibliotechcentralen, 1968.


52. Ibid., p. 152.

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