

"United, We Stand . . ."

MARION A. ANDERSON

What are the factors that influence the production of texts? How are these factors related to the needs of modern schools? What can we as curriculum people do to help in the production of the kinds of texts we want? Marion A. Anderson, editor of elementary school books, Ginn and Company, interprets the problems in the publishing of textbooks and gives some guides in the production of desirable materials.

COOPERATION, founded on mutual understanding and trust, is our basic need in international affairs. It is of no less importance in our educational affairs. We—those of us who staff the schools and those of us who produce the tools of learning for the schools—have a great common purpose. We are working together to serve each child according to his present and future needs for happy and efficient citizenship in our democracy.

The curriculum specialist, working directly with the schools, takes the lead in identifying these needs, in discovering the best ways of meeting them, and in establishing the ultimate goals of instruction. The textbook publisher follows that lead and helps to provide equipment for implementing that instruction. For example, the findings of research, the reports of professional groups, and the considered opinions of great leaders, have been interpreted in new textbooks which are offered as one means of putting desirable changes into effect.

Secretary of State Marshall has said that history must be more effectively taught in order that a more intelligent and better-informed citizenry may cope more ably with the complex problems of modern life. President Truman's Scientific Research Board has warned,

with many other groups, that instruction in mathematics must be improved.

Books to Aid Learning

Even as long as fifty years ago, the plan for introducing history into the grades met with failure until suitable textbooks were written and published. The acceptance of science in the elementary school has been tremendously encouraged by the excellent printed materials which are now available. Geographies are being written to conform more closely to the urgent need for sound knowledge and deep understanding of a world whose dimensions are shrinking daily.

The idea of readiness, the concept of meaning, the learning of wholes before parts, the integration of subjects—all these principles, strengthened by the evidence of research, are embodied in the best modern textbooks. Thus the publisher attempts to decrease the lag between what we *know* about education and what we do about it.

Problems Are Joint Ones

By the very nature of his contribution, the publisher perforce reaches pupils indirectly, through books which are usually organized in terms of school subjects. He may seem to some, therefore, to be less concerned about the in-

dividual, and even to support regimentation or formalism in teaching. The curriculum worker, by the nature of his responsibility, must deal more directly with individuals. He perforce is most interested in the process by which they develop. As a result, an unfortunate gulf may seem to exist between the purposes of publishers and many leaders in elementary education. Although this condition is more apparent than real, it should be remedied if materials of instruction are to be most effectively prepared and used. The publisher and the curriculum worker must understand each other's problems and work together to solve them.

Consider the Limited Appropriations

One of the immediate needs of schools, a need frequently expressed by curriculum workers, is for a greater variety of materials—books which satisfy individual abilities and individual interests. Why does the publisher appear slow in meeting this particular need? The answer is not simple.

In his column in the October 25, 1947 issue of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, Bennett Cerf commented on the public schools of New York City. A famous trade publisher himself, Mr. Cerf deplored the soiled, worn-out books and reported that in 1945 the annual per pupil appropriation for books was 52 cents.

Consider what can be purchased, at current prices, with an allotment of 52 cents per pupil. For the present purpose let us assume that the total amount actually is spent on an average per-pupil basis. Suppose that new primers are wanted for several first grades. At 52 cents per pupil, only three new books

for every four children can be bought—fifteen new books for a class of twenty—thirty new books for a class of forty—not any other new book during the entire year.

Or suppose new readers are wanted for the fourth grade. Since these readers are more expensive than primers, the amount is sufficient for only one book for every two pupils—ten new copies for a class of twenty—twenty copies for a class of forty. If geographies are needed, this appropriation will buy even fewer copies—one new book for perhaps every three boys and girls. A class of forty, furnished with about thirteen new geographies, would, consequently, receive no new books for arithmetic, reading, science, or history, no new reference books, no new story books during the year.

Some schools are more fortunate and can spend \$1.50 annually per pupil for books. For that amount each child in a first grade might get two small books, but this amount would not buy one new book apiece for each pupil in a middle-grade class in geography or science.

The problem may be viewed in another way. Let us suppose that an appropriation of \$10,000 is available. If books can be sold for 93 cents net each, that sum will purchase 10,753 copies; if they must be priced at \$1.20, it will buy only 8333. The gain at the lower figure is 2420 books. Thinking in terms of individuals instead of books or dollars, we may say that at the lower price, more than twenty-four hundred boys and girls have an additional learning aid.

Keep Quality High

This is the crux of the problem. Is this gain worth achieving? Is it desir-

able, in view of limited appropriations, to keep prices low? The publisher believes it is. How then does he succeed in offering inexpensive books? By reducing the number of illustrations? By eliminating color? By shortening and condensing the text and thus reducing the number of pages? By including fewer maps, charts, graphs, or helps for study? By using smaller type, providing narrower margins, crowding more lines of type on a page? To each of these questions the publisher says no. In fact, he is providing more color, better pictures, more pages, more maps, clearer type, wider margins, better format. To keep prices low, he designs books that will sell in large numbers; he depends upon volume—the total number of sales for each book. That is why he tends to avoid small, specialized, and relatively expensive books that will reach a limited market. Henry Ford knew that he could sell a good car cheaply if he had plenty of customers. It's the same with books.

The Concepts Are Not Simple

Another problem that concerns the publisher is the difficulty of the materials in textbooks. Requests for easier books are becoming increasingly—almost alarmingly—frequent. On the other hand, however, many of the topics included by curriculum workers in our elementary school programs and many of those which are recommended for inclusion *are* undeniably difficult. The publisher is not guilty of understatement when he maintains that no magic of word choice, sentence structure, literary skill, or editorial manipulation can simplify inherently difficult concepts. Boys—and girls, too—want

to learn more about airplanes and atomic energy. They are interested in finding out more about the lives of people in faraway places. They want to investigate complicated problems of everyday life. The publisher is faced with the dilemma of supplying easy books about difficult subjects. This is a dilemma which can be satisfactorily met only by the united efforts of those who plan the curriculum and those who produce the tools of learning.

The most pressing need for cooperation in adjusting instructional materials to the modern curriculum is at the intermediate grade level. At the primary level, books and other equipment are reasonably well suited to the school program and to what we know about the child's ability and need to read, to speak, to write, to spell, to compute, to think. The curriculum is close to his daily experiences and is enriched by his home and school activities. However, beginning with the fourth grade, the program becomes more remote from everyday life, more formal, more complex, less definite. The courses of study which guide the writers and publishers of books for this grade and succeeding ones include too many difficult topics. Because of lack of agreement among educators as to what topics can be postponed or dropped entirely, the publisher tends to follow old patterns. More satisfactory materials will follow only when curriculum workers have studied the middle grade programs more thoroughly and arrived at a reasonable consensus concerning its broad outlines.

The inherent difficulty of the topics included in intermediate programs is exaggerated by the current trend to

lighten the vocabulary load of readers and to simplify their content—a trend which receives the enthusiastic approval of teachers. However, unless pupils are to be confused and frustrated, this stretching out of the reading program must be recognized when the curriculum is planned and when, by inference, the topics to be included in textbooks and the other printed materials are selected. We need a better adjustment between the problems studied in science, social studies, and health, and the reading level of students. This question, too, must be solved by the planners of the curriculum and the producers of the learning aids working together.

Educators As Producers

Unless the lines of communication are kept open between laboratory and experimental schools, teachers colleges, colleges of education, and publishers; books will not reflect the best educational thinking and the best selection of content. As plans for curriculum revision are made, could not teachers or supervisors—those with a gift for writing—be released to work on books for children? Could they not test the feasibility of the plans for curriculum improvement by preparing suitable learning aids for the pupils? There is no better way of discovering inconsistencies between theory and practice. Could they not come to the publishers with plans or with manuscripts and discuss the appropriateness of the material for publication? Obstacles will need to be overcome, but let the curriculum worker and publisher face them together.

Recently, because of their preference for different types of instructional ma-

terial, some curriculum workers have been unwilling to participate in the preparation of textbooks. Reasons which turn others from the preparation of textbooks are the exacting demands of writing, combined with the pressure of teaching responsibilities; and a reluctance to interrupt a professional program—and sometimes a career—by withdrawing temporarily from active teaching in order to write. Ideally, gifted persons should be freed from their other duties to assume the task of writing for children. Under such circumstances, books would improve in quality and would more closely keep pace with curriculum change and improvement. Especially among the people engaged in supervision and curriculum work, greater interest in the preparation of textbooks is urgently needed.

Educational publishers constitute a group that performs a service for the schools. They have produced materials that have helped to bring about needed curriculum changes and that have aided progress. They are eager to continue to do their part in helping to put into effect the best of modern theory and practice. Yet their primary function is one of production—of putting into tangible, concrete form the work of others. Since their function is to follow, they must be en rapport with those who lead the way.

Avenues for Cooperation

There are many other ways in which the publishers and school people can work together more effectively. One of our largest states is now at work on an extensive program of curriculum revision. In the spring of 1947 the pub-

lishers were invited to a conference at the office of education in that state. Preliminary plans were outlined and suggestions for cooperation were discussed at a large open meeting. The publishers are now on the mailing list for bulletins which come from the state office of education. They are encouraged to attend local meetings. Such free exchange of ideas is wholesome and inspiring.

During the past year the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development appointed a committee to serve as a liaison between school people and those who are preparing teaching materials. This committee will seek to

determine the needs of the schools in terms of tools for learning and to discover how these needs may be met. As further evidence of the wholesome interest which the Association is taking in this cooperative understanding, the program of the forthcoming national meeting provides, among other things, for a discussion of the so-called Tools of Learning. It appears, therefore, that the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is taking steps to provide the machinery and the forum for a study, by both curriculum makers and publishers, of common problems leading to the achievement of common goals.

Materials for Improved Schools

DOROTHY McCUSKEY and LILLIAN C. PAUKNER

Our concept of the kinds of materials used and produced in a program of curriculum development has undergone much change in recent years. Resource units and curriculum bulletins have replaced bulky and detailed courses of study. Dorothy McCuskey, associate professor of education at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and Lillian C. Paukner, supervisor of elementary curriculum in the Milwaukee public schools, describe some bulletins already in use and give guides for their use in curriculum programs.

WIDESPREAD participation of teachers and citizens in cooperative curriculum planning in recent years has developed a need for many new types of materials. Shelves are now full of excellent courses of study, yearbooks, outlines of subject areas, and information about human development. These materials have been developed cooperatively, in accordance with our "best" techniques; some will stand the tests

both of scholarly scrutiny and of practical usefulness. And yet, school programs and classroom practices do not change as we should like.

What, then, do we need? School people today are asking questions of technique. Supervisors ask, "How can I organize a child study group?" Teachers say, "Just how do you go about developing science activities 'arising out of the needs and experiences' of sixth

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