

The Librarian Sees His Role in the Materials Center

*New challenge—
new opportunity.*

ABOUT the time of World War I, the inhabitants of a small Southern town stared in consternation as they saw a "Victrola" borrowed from someone's parlor being carried into the local high school. They could not conceive of any legitimate reason for such unorthodox equipment in a schoolroom, where pupils were supposed to study and *learn*, not to be entertained.

Soon, however, the students in Miss A.'s English class sat enthralled as they listened to a talented Shakespearean actor of the time declaiming Mark Antony's "Friends, Romans, Countrymen" speech from *Julius Caesar*. The whole play came alive to them. For the first time they grasped the dramatic situation, the history and the literary quality as had been impossible from words and phrases on the printed page.

It has been said that it takes fifty years for a new idea in education to become a common and accepted practice. Miss A., in her own small way, was a pioneer. With wisdom ahead of her time she had dared to use a new medium as an aid to learning. Today, nearly fifty years later,

few teachers rely entirely on the printed page as they seek to inspire their students and motivate learning. The use of films, filmstrips, recordings and all the various other media to improve learning, is the rule rather than the exception.

The rapid increase in the quantity and variety of these so-called teaching aids has created a problem in the minds of some people as to the best ways to make them available and use them to advantage. The word "library" is, of course, derived from the word meaning "book." There are, therefore, some people, even some librarians, who cling to the idea that only printed pages between two covers—books, pamphlets or periodicals—belong in the library. The traditional tables, chairs, shelves and filing cabinets, found in the usual library, are not always adaptable to the storage and use of other types of material.

Accepting New Aids to Learning

In some cases, the librarian has been loath to accept the newer media, although fortunately this is usually the exception. Consequently, the idea of the instructional materials center as a separate place and with a different function,

has grown up. Too often, these two agencies have been competing with each other for the favor of the teachers and students rather than complementing each other or working cooperatively to supply all types of "materials for learning" according to needs of the situation. The school library was born of the necessity for material beyond the textbook and the need to give students opportunity, not only to supplement the textbook, but also to explore the field of knowledge on their own. At the time of its beginning, books, pamphlets and periodicals with perhaps a few pictures, were about the only materials available and certainly the only materials acceptable to the current concept of materials for learning. Therefore, the school library grew up in the tradition as a storehouse of printed materials and was planned, equipped and organized to supply these materials.

With the advent of new media and their acceptance as legitimate aids to learning, it would seem that the library would do well to leave behind the limitations of the past, its *libri*, and broaden its scope to include all types of materials. It does not appear to be necessary for the word "Library" to give way to the term "Materials Center." Actually the definition of "library" in the latest edition of Webster is "a collection of books, manuscripts, musical scores, or other literary and sometimes artistic materials such as paintings or musical recordings." This definition goes on to include photographs, maps or films. In other words, the writer of this article believes that the library, expanded to include all types of materials and many new functions and activities, can and should be the ma-

terials center of the school. This would serve the needs of pupils and teachers with less confusion about where to go to find any given material for learning.

Staff and Facilities

Acceptance of this concept will call for new thinking in several areas. Naturally, as new types of materials and new devices are acquired, arrangements must be made for caring for them, for organizing them for ready availability, and for using them. Also, it is not necessary to rely entirely on commercially produced materials. Many locally produced materials such as charts, diagrams, transparencies and units of illustrative material, can and should be produced to meet local needs. Therefore, facilities for such production are most desirable. The physical quarters and equipment needed for an over-all materials center are quite different from those of the traditional library.

The ideal staff of such a center is a team of librarians, very probably each with a field of specialty, but all thoroughly familiar with the overall operation and with the need for working as a team. There is no reluctance to cross over lines between various types of materials, for example, the mythical line between books and audio-visual, or between audio-visual and purely visual such as pictures, charts, slides and sculptures, which have sometimes been considered the realm of the art specialist. Each member of the team contributes his or her own special knowledge, talent and skill to the whole, working together to achieve a common goal.

The librarian, that is the person who has been trained in the evaluation, selection and organization primarily of books, has a greatly expanded role in a facility

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offering not only books, but also a great variety of other materials. He must then be ready to accept this new role and contribute his special skills to the efficient organization of all materials (classification and cataloging); to the evaluation and selection of all materials, with, of course, the help of other specialists in a particular field; and to assisting patrons to find and use any and all materials which will fit their needs and enrich the learning situation.

Cataloging and Circulating

It has been said that legitimate library materials are limited to those things which are "catalogable" and "circulatable." New times and new philosophies always call for new ways of doing things. Therefore, the variety of new materials and the different uses of some older materials may demand new ways of cataloging and circulating. The librarian need not be restricted by those materials which can be classified by Dewey, although it has been found that this, or any other accepted system, can be used to a remarkable degree. Neither is he limited by usual cataloging rules, since adaptations of these rules can be made to fit the material and serve the same purpose.

In the interest of consistency, however, it is well to keep adaptations in line with the general rules, remembering always the purpose of the catalog. For those materials which cannot be classified and cataloged in the normal way, the librarian is challenged to devise ways which will serve the purpose of the particular teaching-learning situation. For example, in one materials center familiar to the writer, the usual methods of classification and cataloging with some adaptations as necessary, have been applied

to books, pamphlets, films, filmstrips, recordings, slides, portfolios of teaching pictures, large reproductions of works of art, art prints, etc. Among the less orthodox materials in this center are a number of lengths of fabrics. These fabrics are used primarily to demonstrate design or texture, as typical fabrics of a country, or as wall hangings or accessories in displays and exhibits. To classify them as "textiles" would be possible, but this would not necessarily be useful to the situation. Therefore, another way of classifying and cataloging has been devised.

In the ideal catalog of an overall materials center, every item available for circulation should be represented. It will be impossible and impractical to attempt an "author" card for many items, yet most items will have a "title" card, even if a descriptive title has to be more or less invented. "Subject" cards are most important. Different colored cards for different types of materials may be useful. The purpose of this catalog would be to enable the user to determine easily and without "shopping around" in various places, all types of materials which might be useful for improving the teaching and learning process in a given situation.

Promoting Use of Materials

Selection of materials and classification and cataloging, however, are not the only functions of the librarian. Indeed, the major function of the modern school librarian is to promote the use of materials to supplement the curriculum and the general cultural development of the students; and to instruct in the use of these materials. Here again, the role of the librarian takes on new dimensions.

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dren's academic progress, states at one point ". . . the lower class child enters the school situation so poorly prepared to produce what the school demands that initial failure is almost inevitable. . . ." This same paper insists that ". . . the responsibility for such large groups of normal children showing such great scholastic retardation, the high drop-out rate, and, to some extent, the delinquency problem, must rest with the failure of the school to promote a proper acculturation of these children."

It should be noted that several of the writers do take cognizance of the limitations as to what schools can do. Such comments, however, are in the main, brief, almost tangential.

Many of the contributing specialists, after presenting their excellent findings, make recommendations to the schools—and here they are not all so excellent. As might be expected, researchers reach conclusions which veteran school people reached long ago. One of the papers summarizes our needs in one crisp paragraph:

Start the child in school earlier; keep him in school more and more months of the year; retain all who start to school for twelve to fourteen years; expect him to learn more and more during this period, in wider and wider areas of human experience, under the guidance of a teacher who has had more and more training and who is assisted by more and more specialists, who provide an ever-expanding range of services, with access to more and more detailed personal records, based on more and more carefully validated tests.

Brave words indeed! But no more brave than the recommendation that we use more male teachers; that we postpone the teaching of reading; that we win the support and cooperation of parents by organizing associations and

workshops. One specialist assures us that children in depressed areas will show greater achievement if we give them a "demanding syllabus" and "a single standard of academic expectation."

Such suggestions betray lack of experience in the classroom, lack of knowledge of what has been done, lack of awareness of the heartbreaking obstacles schoolmen encounter in their efforts to achieve these very results. Information sent the reviewer by Dr. Passow would indicate that only 7 of the 17 contributors ever taught, some for but 2 or 3 years and not all of these years in depressed communities.

It would seem that to explore "empirical considerations," one of the 58 school people at the conference might have been asked to write a paper adding to the book the practitioner's reactions to the theoretician. Each may teach the other some of the realities of life in schools in depressed areas.

—Reviewed by CHARLES M. SHAPP,
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The Librarian—Preston

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Work with teachers and students takes a variety of directions as the variety of materials grows. The librarian is familiar with the potentialities of all types of materials and alert to many possible uses and applications.

Another aspect of the expanded role of the librarian in the materials center is one of attitude toward the activities within the library. No longer will legitimate activities in the library be confined to quiet reading or study. Some students may be using films in a soundproof booth provided for the purpose; some may be using filmstrips or slides either with projector or viewer; others listening to re-

cordings in a listening room or with earphones, according to the circumstances; others preparing materials in an area where facilities and supplies are made available.

The challenge and the opportunity for the librarian in the materials center is all but limitless. How he meets the challenge and takes advantage of the opportunities will make the difference between whether the library will be swallowed up by the materials center, overshadowed by the materials center or expanded to encompass or become the materials center.

A Librarian—Wilner

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Center looks in a different way at a book. I do not believe that books can be relegated to the region of materials, touching as many of them do the realm of the heart and the spirit. Books cannot be discovered by catalogs and indexes alone. They must be read. How else could we answer requests such as, "Find me a book about a girl who goes away for a visit and has a real good time and comes home again." . . . "Find me a book that feels like *Loretta Mason Potts*." (When you say, "How does it feel?" you receive the reply, "Well, you're there.") . . . "Find me a funny book and a wonderful one." (And, knowing the speaker, you know what *wonderful* means.)

Books are not *things* to be used. Too many teachers ask of a book "How can I use it?", expecting it to teach a lesson or correlate with the study of the moment, underestimating the tremendous dimensions in books: the width of wonder and wisdom, the breadth of beauty, the length of loveliness, the height of humor, and the depth of delight.

Books that give information should

give it accurately and interestingly, but there are books which give immeasurably more. Books that take us beyond the bounds of time and space into ages past, into other regions and races, into imaginative realms where good and evil are engaged in a mighty struggle. This is what makes children readers: the magical process of converting words on a page into the thoughts and feelings of people like ourselves or people far from here or long ago, in mystical realms like Narnia or down-to-earth ones like Cranberry, Connecticut, in the big woods of Wisconsin, or on the Island of the Blue Dolphins, on Spider Monkey Island or on the Island of Tangerina.

Children become readers from experiences with books in which "you're there" knowing, seeing, feeling, understanding, wondering, watching, waiting, hoping, fearing, guessing, wishing.

In the making of readers the school library exists to help.

Communication Specialist—Jensen

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Teachers would be able to devote their time to the tasks that only human beings can accomplish. The planning of programs; the direction of discussion; the identification of student need and difficulty; the evaluation of projects and achievement involving subjective judgments; individual guidance and counseling on the problems of social, personal and career development; the human acts and contacts for which there has never been adequate time and energy—all of these technology can free a teacher to do.

The end result could be that the entire school plant, and local community everywhere and the world at large would be the Centers of Learning, not only for the developing young but also for the graduated adult.

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