

LIBRARY SERVICE: A CHANGING CONCEPT

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"'GOOD' libraries are not enough,"¹ wrote Donald G. Emery, superintendent of schools, Shaker Heights, Ohio, in April 1965. In expanding this statement, he pointed out that today's libraries need more than books, that libraries, both elementary and secondary, must be "genuinely comprehensive" to include all the major forms of information storage and retrieval.

What did Superintendent Emery have in mind when he emphasized storage and retrieval of information? Although he was not at that time describing a dial-access information retrieval system and student responder systems for instruction, he was pointing out that, in addition to the storage of information traditionally found in hard-cover books and retrieved through the book index and the card catalog, even school libraries must move to micro-filming of books, periodicals and documents, to electronic storage of information on magnetic tape and on film, from which retrieval methods are readily available. Certainly Mr. Emery

did not deprecate the value to the learner of the printed page in book form and he stressed repeatedly the need for enlarged book collections and other types of printed and audio-visual materials, while at the same time emphasizing the move to electronic and film techniques of information storage.

These ideas are not revolutionary nor in the far-distant future. Library research reveals many technological advances presently in operation for information storage and retrieval practices in college and university libraries and to some extent in large public libraries. School libraries have lagged behind, it is true, in extending information services to teachers and students. There are several reasons for this lag—lack of money, lack of equipment, lack of qualified and adequate staff, lack of leadership, vision and innovative projects, and too few large district, county or regional organizational patterns. As more and more expanded educational centers are established, reference services can and will be extended to teachers and students in secondary schools.

Individual school libraries, such as

¹ Donald G. Emery. "What Every Library Needs." *Saturday Review* 48:74-75; April 17, 1965.

those in Reavis High School, Oak Lawn, Illinois, and in Shoreline High School, Shoreline School District near Seattle, have for several years utilized microfilm for periodicals and have had more than one microfilm reader in use in these libraries. The storage problem for back copies of magazines is thereby alleviated and a larger resource collection is easily available as students study independently in order to develop a research paper.

Impact of Technology

Lawrence E. Vredevoe and Francis L. Goff² have envisioned the school library of 1970 as a school information center. The information specialist, by means of a microfilm aperture card sorter, returns in a few minutes with perhaps one hundred cards, about an inch in thickness, with microfilm copies of every item in the center on the subject selected. When the patron has run through the cards on a viewer, he may request duplicates in paper print form of those items that cover the material needed.

Microfiche (microfilm in sheet form) is already used by the U.S. Office of Education for its research studies, thus making mandatory the availability of reader printers in professional and research libraries.

A book catalog replacing the traditional card catalog, drawn from the computer and showing the holdings of several or many libraries in the area, with limitless possibilities for developing bibliographies, making additions

and deletions, etc., is in use in many public library systems throughout the country. A book catalog for the elementary school libraries in the San Diego City school system has recently come into use. It is possible for every type of medium, both print and non-print, to be punched on the computer so that total holdings can be easily retrieved in a variety of ways.

Obviously information can be more and more easily stored and retrieved than in the past decade. The technological and detailed aspects of the librarian's job will be lightened. What will be the result? Will the computer replace the librarian? Will there no longer be a need to teach library skills to children? Will the environment for learning be improved? Will individualization increase? How will the role of the teacher and the librarian be changed?

Definition of a School Library

In order to answer some of these questions, the concept of the school library of the 'sixties as developed through national standards, educational philosophy and research, and promising practices must be studied. Whether it is called the instructional materials or resources center, the education center, the information center, the research center or by some other name, the school library as a term of long standing can encompass the philosophy and provide a program of services relating to the changing curriculum and educational innovations.

A school library today, both elementary and secondary, must be a centrally organized collection, readily accessible, of many kinds of materials that, used

² Lawrence E. Vredevoe and Francis L. Goff. "Is Your School or College Library a Bottleneck?" *Journal of Secondary Education* 39:279-84; October 1964.

together, enrich and support the educational program of the school of which it is an integral part. In large schools it may be located in more than one place on the school campus. If subject resource centers are established, however, they can be best maintained when organized as branches of the main library, with administrative control and selection of materials a joint responsibility of teachers and the library staff.

The resources of the main library and its branches include books, magazines and other printed materials, and a variety of audio-visual materials such as films, filmstrips, recordings, tapes and pictures. Many activities take place in the school library as the learning resources center, which comprises a suite of rooms or areas to include, in addition to the traditional reading room and work-storage area, a library classroom for large group instruction, conference rooms for small group discussions, individual study cubicles with listening and viewing equipment and programmed materials for independent study, and the teachers' professional library. Gradually additional space is being provided for the storage and use of many types of audio-visual equipment and materials, and for the production of materials.

The stress continues to be on the program of services given to teachers and students by the library staff—to the guidance program of the school, to the accelerated and advanced placement programs, to the program with exceptional children; a program that encompasses reading guidance, library skills, reference and research techniques; a program that is correlated with all aspects of the curriculum and of each

classroom, and is geared to the abilities, needs and interests of every student and teacher.

The knowledge gained from research on the learning process must be applied to the library as a learning laboratory far more than is yet evident. The impact of new trends and innovations relating to structural changes in flexible scheduling, non-graded instruction, variations in class size, and to the use of human resources in team teaching and independent study has in only relatively few instances brought about a changed concept of the library staff, facilities, materials and program.

The librarian, supported by an increasing amount of a wide variety of resources and working with classroom teachers, can help children and young people to solve problems, develop inquiring minds and rational powers, think and read critically, be creative, study independently, make wise decisions and accept social responsibility.

Research Relating to School Libraries

Is there justification from research studies for the preceding statements? Although research has lagged in this field, some studies have been conducted in addition to the demonstration projects in the Shaker Heights Ford Foundation project and the Knapp School Libraries Projects in two elementary schools in 1963-65 and continuing in six schools at the present time. One research study under a USOE contract was conducted by Mary V. Gaver.³

³ Mary Virginia Gaver. *Effectiveness of Centralized Library Service in Elementary Schools*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963.

Sufficient evidence was found from a limited sample that children in schools with centralized libraries staffed by professional librarians show evidence of better accomplishment in reading, of greater general educational gain than do pupils in schools without libraries.

A study of the Institute of Administrative Research of Teachers College,⁴ investigating staff deployment practices in school systems identified as high quality programs, provided evidence to show that of eight types of professional specialists in these school systems, full-time librarians showed the highest correlation with the school system quality criterion.

More general but extremely important statements have been made about the need for improved school library programs by James B. Conant, Francis H. Keppel, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Harvard Report on Reading in Elementary Schools, to name only a few. What can and must be done then to provide libraries and librarians for the 9½ million children in 41 percent of our schools with no libraries and to increase book collections, which are woefully lacking according to the most recent study of the U.S. Office of Education?⁵

In reality the future is bright. Through the provisions of Title III of the NDEA over a period of a half dozen years equipment and both audio-visual and printed materials have been

added to libraries. Now through the provisions of Title II of Public Law 89-10, school library resources will be expanded to the extent of \$100,000,000 before the end of fiscal 1966. Under Title I it is possible to expand library staffs and facilities; under Title III, in large educational centers, to expand reference services in depth through storage and retrieval of information devices, and to provide centralized cataloging and classification of materials by means of computer equipment. The implications for the profession in recruitment activities and in improved library education programs are tremendous; the knowledge and competencies of librarians, audio-visual personnel and curriculum specialists must be shared far more widely than has been done up to this time.

By 1970 let us hope that every elementary school (in addition to all secondary schools) will have what children and teachers are provided in Prairie Village, Kansas in 1966 in four schools ranging in size from 450-725 pupils. These include a library reading room with acoustical floor covering, a collection of at least 10,000 books and several individual study carrels; two conference rooms; a work-storage-office room; and an adjoining resources center for the teachers' professional library, textbooks, audio-visual materials and equipment, museum pieces and realia, to the extent that a child may check out a test tube for science work if he desires; where each library-instructional resources center has the services of one and one half librarians and one full-time clerical assistant. Then school libraries will no longer be "our national disgrace." ☞

⁴ Bernard H. McKenna. "Patterns of Staff Deployment Related to School Quality." *Institute of Administrative Research*, Vol. 1, No. 3; April 1961.

⁵ Richard L. Darling. *Public School Library Statistics, 1962-63*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education; September 1964.

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