
Library Involvement in Literacy Education Programs of the North Carolina Community College System

Elinor Vaughan

The prevalence of illiteracy in the most prosperous nation on Earth has generated a great deal of publicity in this decade. On the national level, in 1982 a highly publicized report in *U.S. News & World Report* stated that twenty-three million Americans, or one in five adults, lack the reading and writing skills to minimally cope with life in our society; one fifth of the adult population was therefore described as functionally illiterate.¹ In 1983 the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education proclaimed that "... our nation is at risk through the erosion of basic skills."²

The March, 1985 publication, *Illiterate America*, contained the suggestion by author Jonathan Kozol that the report of the National Commission on Education had actually understated the problem of illiteracy: "When we are told by those who write commission studies that our nation is at risk, we need to ask whether that risk is not much greater and far less mechanical than they suggest. It is the risk of ceasing to be a democratic nation altogether."³

Kozol illustrates his alarm by stating that sixty million Americans, a third of the adult population, cannot read the front page of a newspaper.⁴ The lack of literacy skills prevents many of these adults from finding employment in a society which demands increasingly complex skills of its workers. Usually illiterate Americans exert little influence in the political process; therefore they are powerless to help their children escape a similar fate, and the cycle of illiteracy is perpetuated.⁵

More startling facts were reported in April, 1985, in *USA Today*: the United States ranks forty-ninth in literacy among the 158 members of the United Nations; yet most illiterates have completed at least twelve grades.⁶

The implications of functional illiteracy for the American economy and defense were publicized in August, 1985, by the report *Literacy at Work*, prepared by the Northeast-Midwest Institute and funded by the American Can Company Foundation.⁷ Referring to the report, which was presented during the House Education and Labor Committee's hearings on illiteracy in this nation, the committee chairman, Representative Augustus Hawkins of California, stated that the inability of citizens to function effectively in society costs the government about 225 billion dollars in welfare payments, crime, incompetence on the job, lost tax revenue, and remedial education expenditures annually.⁸

North Carolina is third among states in the percentage of adult illiteracy in the population.

Illiteracy as a societal problem has also been publicized in recent months in North Carolina. The involvement of the North Carolina Community College System in an intensified effort to combat illiteracy in the state was announced on August 8, 1984, by the president of the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges, Robert W. Scott, who officially inaugurated a two-year program to promote literacy education, the "North Carolina Adult Literacy Awareness Initiative." Scott stated that illiteracy "... is an economic problem ... It is a social problem It is a human problem."⁹

In a subsequent message to the personnel who work in literacy education programs in the North Carolina Community College System, Scott provided some figures which illustrate the magnitude of the problem of illiteracy in the state:

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"835,620 is not a telephone number or a quarterback's signal. It is the number of North Carolina adults over the age of 25 who have less than an eighth-grade education. This number exceeds the combined populations of Charlotte, Raleigh, Winston-Salem, and Greensboro. Another figure, 1.5 million, signifies the number of adults in our state who have not completed their high school education, a number greater than the combined populations of Wake, Guilford, Cumberland, Forsyth, Durham, and Gaston counties, six of the most populous counties in North Carolina. Only two other states in the union have a higher percentage of the work force without high school diplomas."¹⁰

In August, 1985, the second year of the two-year "Adult Literacy Awareness Initiative," the effort to reach more illiterate adults in need of instruction in basic literacy skills was launched by both former governor Robert W. Scott, now the president of the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges, and the present governor of the state, James G. Martin. Both spoke of the vast numbers of North Carolinians who have been adversely affected by illiteracy and of the effect of their lack of basic skills on the economy of the state. Scott stated that despite a forty-eight percent increase in enrollment in Adult Basic Education classes from 1981 to 1984, only six percent of adults in need of literacy education have been reached.¹¹ Scott also stated that low productivity, absenteeism, and poor quality work are often associated with illiterate workers, and he continued that literacy education programs "can and do indeed turn a tax burden into a taxpayer."¹²

The social and economic implications of illiteracy cited by President Scott were underscored by Governor Martin when he stated, "The loss of human potential to our people, our economy, and to our state's future is enormous. Industries who are considering coming to North Carolina want to be assured of a literate and trainable work force."¹³

Across the state, newspaper editorials have publicized the need for the alleviation of the problem of illiteracy in North Carolina. For example, the lead editorial in the *Winston-Salem Journal* of Sunday, August 11, 1985, noted that North Carolina is third among states in the percentage of adult illiteracy in the population, and this situation has resulted in an "illiteracy penalty" being imposed on the state in terms of a less knowledgeable citizenry and a drain on the economy. The editorial concluded with the suggestion that the repeal of the penalty of adult functional illiteracy "should become a high priority on

the agenda for North Carolina and the nation."¹⁴

The Role of Libraries

The urgency of the need for literacy education in the decade of the eighties at the state and national levels has been highlighted; a related topic is an exploration of the role of libraries in supporting the impetus for literacy education.

At the national level the voices who support the literacy education movement and the role of libraries in this mission have been apparent. Writing in 1981, Henry Drennan of the Research and Demonstration Branch, Office of Libraries and Learning Technologies, United States Department of Education, described in general terms the commitment of librarians to the cause of promoting the value of literacy: "Librarians, with other educators, share a deep unease about illiteracy. Their concern is rooted in the power of the written word to overcome social disabilities and to furnish opportunity for well-being."¹⁵

In 1983 librarians responded positively to the urgency of the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education by participating in the Libraries and Learning Project, sponsored by the United States Department of Education, Center for Libraries and Education Improvement. Suggestions for implementing the recommendations contained in *A Nation at Risk* were gathered in *Libraries and the Learning Society; Papers in Response to a Nation at Risk*.¹⁶ Representing academic librarians, Richard M. Dougherty discussed the responsibility to students with poor literacy skills as follows: "The mediocrity referred to by the *At Risk* authors refers to the bulk of our school age population, but there is a special need to aid those groups that are frequently categorized as disadvantaged Our strategy is to link together the talents of librarians, counselors, and reading instructors using the library environment as the program's focal point."¹⁷

Also written in response to *A Nation at Risk* was the 1984 report by the American Library Association Task Force on Excellence in Education, *Realities: Educational Reform in a Learning Society* which recommended increased cooperation between libraries and literacy volunteers and expanded support for literacy training programs for adults, as well as other suggestions for strengthening our educational programs.¹⁸

Yet another exhortation on the national level for the alleviation of adult illiteracy in America was offered by the Librarian of Congress, Daniel J. Boorstin. On December 7, 1984, Dr. Boorstin proposed in a report to the Congress of the United

States to eradicate adult illiteracy in the United States over the next several years. Suggesting that there would be no better way to observe the two-hundredth anniversary of the United States Constitution in 1989 than to abolish illiteracy, Dr. Boorstin stated: "There would be no better manifest of our determination to fulfill the hopes of our founders and justify the faith that a free people can provide themselves and their children with the knowledge that will keep them free."¹⁹

Concerning the reactions of those North Carolinians representing libraries to the calls for literacy education in the decade of the eighties, in 1982 H.K. Griggs asked for cooperation among North Carolinians, including educators, librarians, business leaders, and legislators, to "form a coalition to develop awareness and develop plans and secure resources to reduce the catastrophic effect of the 1,000,000 illiterates in the state."²⁰

The previously discussed "Adult Literacy Awareness Initiative" sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges has been one response to this plea. Librarians, too, have responded, either by sponsoring or promoting literacy education programs. One example of multi-agency sponsorship of a literacy education program is Project LIFT (Learning Information for Today). Sponsored by the Durham County Literacy Council, the Durham County Public Library, local educational institutions, and service organizations, LIFT promotes and provides literacy education tutoring services.²¹

Other examples of literacy education projects involving multi-agency cooperation served as models of successful projects at spring workshops sponsored by the North Carolina Library Association Public Library Section Literacy Committee. Two workshops held in May, 1985, and titled "Learning About Literacy: How to Set Up a Literacy Program in Your Library," highlighted the ABLE (Adult Basic Literacy Education) Project, sponsored by Central Piedmont Community College; Project REAL (Reading Education for Adults at the Library) sponsored by the Rockingham County Public Library in conjunction with Rockingham Community College; and the ACE (Adult Continuing Education) Department at Forsyth County Public Library, which works closely with Forsyth Technical College and the local literacy council.²²

As references to the "Adult Literacy Awareness Initiative" and the library-sponsored programs just mentioned illustrate, it is apparent that responses to the need for literacy education among North Carolinians in the 1980s have involved the North Carolina Community College

System. The third largest such system in the nation, the North Carolina organization of fifty-eight technical and community colleges has been committed to literacy education since the inception of the system in 1963, as literacy skills have long been considered important in helping North Carolinians train for jobs and in making the labor force in North Carolina attractive to new industry. One example of the impact the community college system has had on adult education in North Carolina is the fact that currently about one-fifth of all high school diplomas, or the equivalent, awarded to North Carolinians are given to adults enrolled in the basic education programs offered by the community college system.²³

... our nation is at risk through the erosion of basic skills.

The primary purpose of this paper is to examine the role played by the libraries or learning resources centers of the North Carolina Community College System in the fulfillment of the literacy education mission of the system.

The Role of the Community College Library

Discussion of the role of the technical or community college library in the fulfillment of the literacy education mission of such institutions has not been prolific. Most literacy-related programs reported in the literature have been sponsored by public libraries and community agencies, but rarely by the libraries of the technical or community colleges. Reports of support for institutional literacy programs have also been sparse, as pertains to the technical or community college libraries.

In 1981 Richardson, Martens, and Fisk discussed three categories of college literacy education programs, referred to as remedial, compensatory, and developmental programs. In broad terms they explained the role played by libraries in support of these programs. Their work, *Functional Literacy in the College Setting*, was not specific to junior, community, or technical college libraries or learning resources centers, however.²⁴

Baughman in 1982 discussed the need for junior and community college librarians to involve themselves in assisting "new learners," often enrolled in literacy programs such as those described by Richardson, Martens, and Fisk, to succeed in the educational setting of the community or junior college.²⁵

The only major study that focused on the role of the college library in literacy education was conducted by Ester G. Smith in 1981. Funded by the Office of Libraries and Learning Technologies of the United States Department of Education, the *Libraries in Literacy* project collected data on libraries in relation to literacy programs, including college programs. Almost two hundred references to literacy programs were made, but none that were concerned with community colleges. Most references were to public library literacy projects.²⁶

Truett²⁷ and Shaughnessy²⁸ reported separately studies of small samples of fairly inactive levels of library support for community college literacy education programs; library staff members did not actively promote literacy-related programs but did make materials and space available.

Another report of a small sample was made by Person and Phifer in 1983, when they reported the responses of thirty-one library/learning resources center directors to a questionnaire concerning the nature of their involvement in the literacy programs of their community colleges, which were located in eight eastern states. The results indicated that while the directors recognized functional illiteracy to be a problem in their communities, there was a rather low level of participation in local literacy efforts, including cooperation with other agencies involved in literacy education.²⁹

In a separate study, Person and Phifer reported in 1985 that libraries in both community colleges and four-year institutions provided primarily traditional or passive library services, such as making materials available or providing library orientation when requested, in support of institutional literacy education programs. In this study, twenty community colleges were matched with twenty four-year colleges located in eight eastern states. Although the authors were encouraged to find awareness of concern for the growing national problem of functional illiteracy at all institutions and evidence of support for literacy education at all libraries included in the study, the authors suggested that library staffs consider planning for more active involvement in programs to support literacy education, and they suggested that the library staffs plan for more interaction with faculty, the library staff at fellow institutions, and with community agencies that are concerned with literacy education.³⁰

As for information regarding library support for literacy education programs of the North Carolina Community College System, no extensive

studies could be located. However, there have been reports concerning the activities of the technical and community college libraries in North Carolina, which include information about the tutoring and developmental studies that may be included, along with the library services, in the learning resources center (LRC) concept framework utilized in many of the institutions in the North Carolina Community College System. A comprehensive study of this nature was conducted in 1979 and reported in 1980 by Ernest W. Tomkins.³¹

In 1983 Ronald L. Plummer discussed the role of community college librarians as agents of education for adult students, including those students in need of instruction in basic skills, within the setting of the learning resources center. Several North Carolina Community College LRC directors were interviewed by the author. The article stressed the idea that the librarian of the technical or community college should be available to help students achieve their learning objectives, regardless of the level of instruction in which the student is involved.³²

The Survey of Literacy Programs

In order to obtain more extensive information about the nature of library support for the literacy education mission of the North Carolina Community College System, identical three-part surveys were sent in April, 1985, to both library program directors and directors of the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program at fifty-seven of the fifty-eight members of the North Carolina Community College System. Stanly Technical College in Albemarle was excluded from the survey so as to preclude the possibility of the emergence of preconceived ideas.

It was expected that a comprehensive and detailed report of the nature of library support for the literacy programs of the community college system could be obtained by surveying both those persons who work most directly for the provision of library services, the library program directors, and the persons who plan for the provision of instruction for the client group most in need of literacy education at the institutions, the directors of the Adult Basic Education programs. The Adult Basic Education programs, located at each of the institutions in the North Carolina Community College System, serve those students who receive instruction in basic reading and mathematics skills at or below the eighth grade level, depending on the needs of the students. According to Mark R. Van Sciver, 49,600 students

were enrolled in such classes during the 1984-85 school year.³³

The following definitions preceded the questionnaire that was answered by the library and ABE personnel, along with instructions that respondents were to complete the surveys without collaboration and return them independently:

1. *Functional illiteracy* is the quality or state of being unable to read or write sufficiently well to function successfully in society. At the North Carolina community college, the student who has less than an eighth-grade education is placed in Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes; it is this population of students that will be referred to as the functionally illiterate students who are enrolled in literacy education classes.

2. *Literacy program director*—the person who is most directly responsible for administering the literacy education program of the community college; this person may report to a superior who has final approval of major decisions involving the literacy program.

3. *Literacy program facilitators*—teachers of the Adult Basic Education classes; they report to the literacy program director.

4. *Library program director*—the person who oversees the daily functioning of the library program; this person may report to a superior who has final approval of major decisions involving the library.

A one hundred per cent return was achieved from the study population. The collected data were arranged in tabular format, observations were noted, and conclusions were derived. A report of the major observations and conclusions follows.

Major Observations and Conclusions

First Section.

Results of the first section of the three-part survey provided information concerning the administration of library and literacy programs at the various institutions, as well as an updated profile of the components of the various learning resources centers that were represented, thereby complementing Tompkins' 1979-80 study (see note 31). The services most frequently reported as available through the learning resources centers according to the library program directors were library and audiovisual services. Four institutions, Cape Fear Technical Institute and Craven, Isothermal, and Southeastern Community Colleges, reported that only library service was administered through the learning resources center (LRC). Three other institutions, Forsyth and Guilford Technical Colleges and Sandhills Community

College, reported that the learning resources concept was not in use, but rather the library was a separate administrative unit. The institutions which reported the largest number of functions administered through the learning resources center, ten, were Central Carolina Technical College, Davidson County Community College, and Randolph Technical College. An average of 4.78 programs or services were administered through the learning resources centers at the fifty-four institutions which employ the learning resources concept.

Concerning the administration of the Adult Basic Education programs, literacy program directors specified the department of continuing education most often, thirty-four times, as the administrative agency for their programs. Six literacy directors reported that the ABE program was administered through the learning resources center; these programs were located at Beaufort County Community College, Davidson County Community College, Edgecombe Technical College, Halifax Community College, Nash Technical College, and Roanoke-Chowan Technical College.

Second Section.

The second section of the three-part survey was intended to gather information pertaining to the respondents' perception of functional illiter-



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TABLE I.
Perceived Levels of Functional Illiteracy

Responses	Literacy Program Directors (N=57)		Library Program Directors (N=57)	
	N	% of N	N	% of N
Functional illiteracy is widespread in the area.	48	84	26	46
Functional illiteracy is a problem in the area but less so than in other areas.	5	9	21	37
Functional illiteracy affects a significant minority of the area population.	4	7	5	9
Functional illiteracy affects only a small portion of the area population.	0	0	0	0
No response.	0	0	5	9

acy as a community problem and the role played by the North Carolina Community College System in the provision of literacy education services to the functionally illiterate segments of the population. The extent of cooperation among community agencies to provide literacy education programs was also explored.

In order to obtain information concerning the respondents' perception of the prevalence of functional illiteracy in the various service areas, respondents were given four choices of broad categories in which to record their perceptions. A summary of the responses to this area of questioning is contained in Table I. (Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number on all tables.)

Several observations can be made in reference to the data reported in Table I. One is that literacy program directors exhibited a much higher level of perception of functional illiteracy as a widespread community problem than did library program directors; however, all who responded perceived functional illiteracy to affect

at least a significant minority, in their opinion. The observation can also be made that all literacy directors responded to the question, but nine per cent of the librarians failed to respond. Perhaps the librarians felt unqualified to answer the question; or, perhaps they simply chose to omit the question.

When asked specifically to estimate the percentage of the population in their service areas who could be described as functionally illiterate, there were again indications that librarians were reluctant to answer for one reason or another, as almost half the library program directors omitted the question (see Table II).

The range of estimates of functional illiteracy most frequently specified by the literacy program directors, twenty to twenty-nine per cent, roughly corresponds with a report on functional illiteracy in North Carolina which was prepared by another agency, thereby lending validity to the estimates provided on this survey. A report on functional illiteracy in North Carolina prepared by the Forsyth County Public Library based on 1980 United

TABLE II.
Estimated Percentages of Functionally Illiterate Persons

Percentage of Functional Illiteracy Estimated	Literacy Program Directors (N=57)		Library Program Directors (N=57)	
	N	% of N	N	% of N
55 or over	2	4	2	4
50-54	3	5	1	2
45-49	2	4	1	2
40-44	4	7	3	5
35-39	3	5	2	4
30-34	8	14	5	9
25-29	10	18	4	7
20-24	11	19	5	9
15-19	5	9	6	11
10-14	4	7	2	4
0-9	0	0	0	0
No response	5	9	26	46

States Census data places the average state-wide functional illiteracy rate at twenty-four per cent.³⁴

The importance of the North Carolina Community College System as a provider of literacy education in the state was affirmed by both groups of respondents, as ninety-four per cent of the literacy program directors and eighty-nine per cent of the library program directors identified the community college system as the sole or primary provider of literacy education in their service areas. Information concerning other providers of literacy education in the state, according to the respondents, also emerged from the survey.

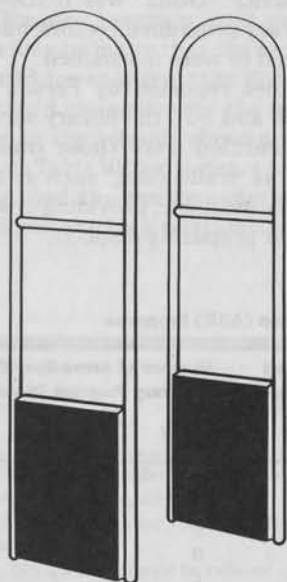
A summary of the agencies cited by both groups of respondents as providers of literacy education in North Carolina is provided in Table III.

Third Section.

The third section of the three-part survey attempted to identify and evaluate respondents' perceptions of the role of library service in the provision of basic literacy education instruction in the North Carolina Community College System. Respondents' perceptions of the appropriate role of library service in institutional literacy education programs as well as reports of the various

TABLE III.
Identification of Providers of Literacy Education in North Carolina

Agencies Cited	Identified by Literacy Program Directors (N=57)		Identified by Library Program Directors N=57	
	N	% of N	N	% of N
A unit of the North Carolina Community College System	57	100	53	93
Public schools	8	14	11	19
YMCA or YWCA	0	0	2	4
Laubach volunteers	23	40	15	26
Public libraries	9	16	13	23
Churches	19	33	11	19
Miscellaneous others	12	21	6	11
No response	0	0	4	7



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TABLE IV.
Perceived Levels of Appropriate Library Involvement in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program

Responses	Selections by Literacy Program Directors (N=57)		Selections by Library Program Directors (N=57)	
	N	% of N	N	% of N
Library staff should plan for heavy use of library resources by ABE students.	22	39	21	37
Library staff should expect to provide support for ABE programs; however no planning for library use is expected to take place among library or literacy program directors.	11	19	17	30
Library staff should expect little use of library by ABE students.	24	42	15	26
No response.	0	0	4	7

library services made available to ABE students were examined. As Table IV illustrates, an expectation of a somewhat higher level of library use by ABE students was indicated by library program directors than by literacy program directors.

Concerning specified descriptions of library services, respondents were provided with a list of eleven library functions as well as an "other" option with space allowed by description of any services that were added. Actually, a non-selection as well as a selection process occurred at this point, as one quarter of the literacy program directors reported no areas of library involvement in the ABE program, and twenty-one per cent of the library program directors did the same (see Table V). Perhaps the literacy program directors were not familiar with the library offerings for the ABE students; perhaps they perceived an absence of services; perhaps they simply chose not to respond to this line of questioning. Several library program directors frankly stated that they had little involvement with the ABE program; specific comments will follow.

Among library program directors, the largest number of respondents, thirteen of fifty-seven, reported two areas of service to the Adult Basic Education students. As Table V indicates, few respondents reported more than four areas of library involvement in the literacy education program.

Table VI specifies the eleven areas of library functions from which respondents were asked to identify the offerings to ABE students, as well as the rate of response. "Other" services identified by librarians were two services reported once each by separate library program directors as follows: (1) cataloging of ABE materials, and (2) directional reference service. "Other" was marked by seven different literacy program directors, but the services they referred to were not named.

As in the studies reported by Person and Phifer (see notes 29 and 30), the library services most frequently identified were those that are generally regarded as "traditional," such as making reading materials available, providing orientation to the library, or preparing displays.

TABLE V.
Quantitative Report of Areas of Library Involvement in Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs

Number of Areas of Library Involvement Reported	Number of Areas Specified by Literacy Program Directors (N=57)		Number of Areas Specified by Library Program Directors (N=57)	
	N	% of N	N	N
12 or more	0	0	0	0
11	1	2	0	0
10	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0
8	0	0	1	2
7	1	2	1	2
6	2	4	1	2
5	3	5	2	4
4	4	7	7	12
3	9	16	11	19
2	11	19	13	23
1	12	21	9	16
0	14	25	12	21

TABLE VI.
Specified Areas of Library Involvement in Adult Basic Education (ABE) Programs

Services Reported	Availability According to Literacy Program Directors (N=57)		Availability According to Library Program Directors (N=57)	
	N	% of N	N	% of N
Provides orientation to library	15	26	23	40
Provides bibliographic instruction	4	7	8	14
Circulates ABE texts	18	32	18	32
Has available high interest/low vocabulary materials	21	37	31	54
Provides special shelving for high/low materials	12	21	9	16
Consults with ABE staff concerning selections	11	19	8	14
Provides space for tutoring ABE students	8	14	5	9
Coordinates tutoring volunteers	2	4	2	4
Cooperates with community agencies to promote literacy programs	8	14	4	7
Prepares promotional displays	13	23	13	23
Plans regularly with ABE staff for library involvement	3	5	1	2
Other	7	12	2	4
None	14	25	12	21

Comments Clarify Postions

The final portion of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate any of several suggested changes in the interrelationship of library and literacy program facilitators that were considered desirable, and additional comments were invited. As Table VII indicates, a non-selection as well as a selection process occurred, as a number of respondents did not indicate the desirability of changes in the working relationships of library and literacy program staff persons. Interpretations may be made that the non-respondents saw no need for changes; they did not agree that the suggested changes were the appropriate ones to make; or they simply chose not to respond. However, as Table VII indicates, a selection process did occur, and the results point to perceived needs for closer working relationships and better com-

munication among the library and literacy program personnel at the various institutions of the North Carolina Community College System.

Comments were invited at the conclusion of the questionnaire, and many of the comments underscored the interpretation just stated of the desirability perceived among a number of respondents of working toward more open lines of communication among library and literacy program personnel. Typical comments of this nature from library personnel were: "This survey has facilitated a new concern for me ... I hadn't thought about interaction of facilitators of literacy and library programs. Thank you!" and "All options [suggested areas of library involvement] are good. We need to do more."

Other library personnel seemed interested in improving efforts to support the ABE program—if

TABLE VII.
Changes in Program Procedures.

Suggested Changes	Selected by Literacy Program Directors (N=57)		Selected by Library Program Directors (N=57)	
	N	% of N	N	% of N
A library staff member should be designated to work with literacy staff concerning ABE program.	21	37	23	40
A designated time for joint ABE/library staff consultation should be set up.	12	21	24	42
The library staff should be relieved of all responsibility for handling ABE texts.	3	5	2	4
The library budget needs to reflect fewer expenditures in support of ABE program.	2	4	6	11
ABE staff persons should exert greater effort to inform library staff of program needs.	24	42	29	51
The library budget should include greater expenditures in support of ABE.	16	28	27	47
No response.	14	25	7	12

asked to do so. One comment of this nature was, "The library staff is willing to assist the literacy education program in any way it can. At our school, all the program director has to do is ask, and the library staff will do whatever it can." Another librarian commented, "Since I have been librarian, there has been no real involvement with the ABE program. I would be willing to work with the facilitators to improve the services of the library to these people."

Other comments from librarians indicated that very little has been expected from their libraries in terms of support for the Adult Basic Education program, and that little change is expected. Several cited difficulties in providing services to off-campus classes. One library program director stated, "The library has never had any connection with the literacy program. The Library Services Department is completely separate from any developmental studies program." Another librarian stated, "I have answered few questions on the survey because the LRC has had little involvement with the literacy program. But perhaps that is exactly what you were trying to find out from your study."

Comments from literacy program directors indicated a range of reactions, also. Some comments by ABE directors indicated that they have established rapport with the library personnel at their institutions, such as the comment, "The library staff and the ABE staff have an excellent working relationship."

Other comments indicated that the library staff is cooperative when services are requested, such as "Library staff is always cooperative and attempts to satisfy requests that are made for the benefit of the literacy students."

As was the case with comments from library personnel, some comments from literacy education personnel indicated little library involvement in the literacy education programs. Some cited the predominance of off-campus classes; others implied that the library staff was not greatly interested in providing services to ABE students. One Adult Basic Education program director stated that the library staff "... doesn't see the need to do any more than required." However, at another institution, it seems apparent that the library staff would not be encouraged to work with the literacy education students, as the literacy program director stated, "All literacy education materials are provided by ABE program—library use is not needed."

Several literacy program directors, however, acknowledged the need for changes in their working relationship with the library staff and seemed

eager to do so. One comment was, "There is little interaction between my office and the library. This is as much my fault as anyone's." Another ABE director stated, "We would greatly benefit from library special displays and programs." And a related comment from another ABE director stated that "the entire [library] staff ... should promote the [ABE] program from every mountain top."

Conclusion

Functional illiteracy has been recognized in the decade of the 1980s as a threat to the quality of life and the economy in the United States and in North Carolina. A concerted effort is being made in North Carolina to alleviate functional illiteracy through basic skills classes sponsored by the North Carolina Community College System and other public agencies, as well as through the cooperative efforts of volunteers and various employers who appreciate the skills of a literate work force.

The libraries of the North Carolina Community College System, administered separately or as a component of the learning resources center, have not been particularly active in the literacy education initiative, according to the results of the survey just reported. For the most part, services to Adult Basic Education students have been the traditional ones, including such services as making materials available and providing library orientation information upon request. Perhaps this has been because active involvement in the provision of library services to Adult Basic Education students has not been seen as necessary or appropriate, in light of all the other demands made on library personnel, particularly from students enrolled in curriculum programs.

However, perhaps in this decade of the 1980s, as the state and nation must contend with attempting to alleviate the problems caused by functional illiteracy, the librarians of the North Carolina Community College system can find additional ways to assist in the literacy education efforts.

As was suggested by several participants in the survey just discussed, joint efforts among literacy and library program directors may prove helpful. Perhaps joint planning sessions, beginning with discussions of program missions, could provide opportunities for planning displays, programs, publicity campaigns, and similar activities.

A recent publication which may prove useful for establishing areas of support and cooperation is *The Library Literacy Connection*. Published in

1984 and planned for librarians and Adult Basic Education teachers, this handbook discusses criteria for selection of appropriate materials for adult new readers and provides a bibliography of appropriate new materials. It also discusses skills new readers must master, provides suggestions concerning collection organization, and suggests methods of cooperation for literacy education with public libraries.³⁵

Steven Baughman has suggested that it is the librarians of the community colleges who have helped to transform disadvantaged students to successful learners: "The role of the community college librarian, whether as interpreter of the collection, media specialist, or study skills counselor, can provide the human link between new learners and some of the complicated media forms and associated technology necessary for them to survive the initial college experience."³⁶

Perhaps community college librarians working with those who teach the basic literacy skills can continue to touch the lives of even more new learners.

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