

THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN AND LEARNING

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Since its inception, the school library has been one of the most specialized of libraries. Its objectives are derived from the purposes and programs of the school community served, including those formally stated in curriculum materials and many unstated but obvious personal goals of young people. As a school changes its emphasis, objectives, organization or methods, its library must change to be truly supportive. Giving leadership in designing such change is one of the most important responsibilities of school librarians or media specialists today.

In response to educational change school libraries are emerging in fact as well as theory today as educational media centers. They offer a great variety of instructional materials including many formats with their accompanying technology. They provide services to faculty and to students, assisting them in becoming more expert in the process of free inquiry as a basis for learning. They are intellectual laboratories, essential for achieving many commonly accepted educational goals. As educational agencies, school libraries are fast becoming a generative as well as a supportive force.

To be effective the school media center must be easily accessible, planned to encourage independent study as well as group activity, and envisioned as a learning center. Its media collection and services are related integrally to the basic learning program of the school; no longer is it seen *only* as a desirable place for students to go for enrichment or supplementary experiences once they have completed basic assignments. In school organization, it is recognized as a center for learning and for teaching, used by students as they need it to achieve educational purposes and plans, and not just as a place to "spend a period." This requires much flexibility in scheduling if access to the library is to be a reality.

The school library provides media and services in classrooms and other teaching stations, not just in the place called the library or media center. There is recognition that much of the library's collection should be available for use by students and teachers at home. Teachers and curriculum specialists should depend on the library for assistance in designing and effecting learning experiences, especially at the critical steps of evaluating, procuring, retrieving, utilizing or producing educational media. Students should become involved in this process when it provides useful learning experiences for them.

There is less reference today in professional literature to "the librarian" or "the media specialist" and more reference to "the media staff." The new standards for school media programs published jointly by the National Education Association and the American Library Association recommend a staff of professionals, technicians and aides adequate in size and qualifications to provide the media services teachers and students must have in a good school. The standards are realistic but not attained as yet in most of the nation's schools. As the staff envisioned in the standards emerges in schools throughout this land, there should be remarkable impact on educational achievement.

With this introduction, what about librarians and learning? Implicit in these definitions of the school media program are certain expectancies related to the professional staff. Some of these expectancies require professional knowledge, skills or abilities traditionally expected of school librarians or of audiovisualists; however, some are new areas of competence or extensions of traditional requirements.

Identification of staff requirements for emerging school media services and programming for preservice and continuing education of staff constitute one of education's most challenging problems. It must be studied cooperatively and seriously by all segments of the education community affected: by school administrators who are responsible for providing appropriate and adequate staffing in schools; by library and other educators in colleges and universities who are responsible for preparation of media specialists; and by supervisors, administrators and university personnel who share responsibility for providing continuing education opportunities for media specialists. Teacher education personnel share responsibility for assisting teachers to understand the role of media in learning and in teaching, to recognize the importance of good media services and to utilize effectively the assistance of media specialists.

Without elaborate discussion, it appears that the following requirements are essential for all media specialists who would assume general responsibilities in this field or who would relate their specializations to the general program of media services:

1. To understand learning theories and their implications for designing instructional programs.
2. To be skilled in curriculum planning, understanding purposes, processes and problems in this area.
3. To be knowledgeable about human development, particularly the needs, interests, problems and potential of young people in modern society.
4. To understand group dynamics as a basis for working effectively in educational leadership.
5. To have specialized knowledge and competence in the field of educational media, basic to building and administering a service program in the school.
6. To have competence as an administrator, capable of managing programs involving significant expenditures, personnel administration, and program planning and evaluation.
7. To have competence as a teacher, able to assist other teachers and students in becoming increasingly skillful in their choice and use of educational media.

Surely there are other requirements that could be identified and agreed upon. But these seven seem to encompass the major areas of expectancy. Note that a major part of these relate to knowledge or competence required also of other teachers or educational specialists involved in the learning program. This proportion seems reasonable if the school media specialist is to be able to relate properly to the teaching team of which he is a part.

Librarians or school media specialists contribute directly to the nature and quality of the learning environment in the modern school. They give leadership in building a collection of media that will be a major determinant of learning and that

often generates and directs learning. They cooperate in planning and providing instruction to ensure students' learning how to learn, particularly in relation to techniques of searching, evaluating, and synthesizing informational data and of using libraries and related technology. They assist teachers and other specialists in designing instruction and in the operational aspects of such programs. They join with others on a faculty in studying the needs of learners and in continuous curriculum planning to meet these needs.

It seems obvious, yet significant to note, that school media specialists themselves must continue to learn professionally. They must attempt to keep up with new media and its implications. They must continue to learn what research says about learning, teaching, and the role of media. They must consider current studies of education's role, with concern for the nature of society, the relevance of education for today's youth, and the nation's problems and interests. They must identify more effective ways to cooperate in the education enterprise, working with other educators and coordinating more effectively the efforts of specialists within the media field.

Surely this suggests a renewed sense of the significance of the work of the school media specialist and a reaffirmation of professional commitment.

REPORT FROM PRESIDENT (Cont'd)

school librarians. College and public librarians requested that the next workshop be held on a Friday. The Center was able to schedule a Friday meeting more easily than a Saturday one. So we trust that school librarians who are members of committees can arrange professional leave and be able to attend.

On May 11, 1970, a Library Technical Assistant Workshop was held at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, sponsored by CPCC, Appalachian State University, the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges, and the North Carolina Library Association. Dr. Louis Shores was the keynote speaker, using the topic "Middlemanship — New Careers in Libraries." A symposium, moderated by Mrs. Vera Melton, Director of Library Services of the Department of Community Colleges, was presented by John Martinson, Communication Service Corp., Washington, D. C.; John Marshall, Professor of Library Science, University of Toronto; Henry Drennan, Library Branch, U. S. Office of Education; Joseph Godsey, Post-Secondary Programs, Texas Education Agency; and Rosalind Campbell, Librarian, Caldwell Technical Institute. Group discussions, with the above people as consultants, were held in the afternoon.

The NCASL is to be congratulated for its fine membership drive. They have offered a real challenge to other sections and to all members.

Particular thanks are due to Charlesanna Fox and the National Library Week Committee. Their work has made a real impact throughout the state. All are especially grateful to Mrs. Robert Scott, who has been such an energetic, interested, and enthusiastic chairman. In addition to her continuing effort, Mrs. Scott and her family made several television scenes. These are available to local TV stations and are suitable for use any time during the year.

In another part of this journal you will find a list of all 1969-71 committees.