

A NEW LIBRARIAN VIEWS HER ROLE

by

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Talk about running scared! My secure collegiate world has gone. "Outside" and just ahead lies an overwhelming responsibility: for a library, its resources, its services, its place in the school. Look out for the new librarian, folks: she's not real yet, only wishes and hopes, dreams and plans, praying she won't get shot down because of some hair-brained scheme as she attempts to fulfill her role. And as this new librarian, I can only speak of what I *hope* my role will be.

Because I feel so close to students of secondary school ages, I requested a position on this level. Lacking experience as a librarian except as a graduate assistant and as a student librarian last year, I can only offer my youth to the teen-agers and to the school for whatever it's worth. Hopefully, it will give me one advantage in communicating more freely and easily with my library users, recognizing and responding to their needs, following their dreams, building their futures.

My first responsibility must be to learn my school, identifying myself with its objectives, its curriculum, its teachers and students, hopefully helping to formulate its plans. I must bring the library out where it can be seen for its potential, involving myself in making this potential come true, making the library *function* for students and teachers. I must be the catalyst that sparks every resource, every service available, into action by whatever means it takes, to integrate classroom and library. Our students and teachers can and must help me; I cannot "sell" my wares if they are not responsive to what is offered. This first role is endless; a librarian must continue to make the library necessary to the school, must continue to enlist the aid of teachers and students in causing it to work, and, in the process, must continue to evaluate herself, her role as librarian, her program.

A Major Responsibility

As a new librarian, I see as my major responsibility the services I will offer and provide to students, teachers, and other school personnel. Deciding how to begin will be my first, possibly my biggest, step: Which services are already established, which ones need promoting, which others should be introduced? It will be my responsibility to find out what we have in the library, who can use it, how they can best use it—and then to make the library's resources accessible. Accessibility, as I see it, means many things: all materials in the library within reach of the user and highly visible; time and space to explore them; planned and spur-of-the-moment experiences in promoting, introducing, discussing books, other media, and ideas; library resources nudging the elbows of students in classrooms and throughout the school; liberal borrowing policies—every conceivable means we can devise to connect and relate the library to students and teachers.

I will probably be a nuisance, and possibly a menace, to many teachers, but I must find ways to make our resources *used*. I hope to build a close relationship with teachers and students, getting into the classrooms, bringing them into the library, developing a network of communication, cooperation, service. I'll start with the understanding that

all types of media, all available resources, are needed in teaching and learning, and that teachers share with me the responsibility for their effective utilization.

I want to enter the classroom, to know the students and the curriculum as the teachers do, to learn to see the school, the library, and the librarian from their point of view. I need this perspective to balance and test my own perception of my role. I want and need feedback from those with whom I work, to make the library program more usable, more alive, more responsive to needs.

Developing services and building demand for them are the imperatives of the school librarian. It's a role that calls for infinite skill, creativity, and lots of courage. I don't expect to avoid trial and error ways of learning. By becoming sensitive to what works and what doesn't, with whom and when; by showing my interest in every student and every classroom; by being *involved* in the total school program; I hope to help students and teachers realize that our library is indispensable.

And now you know why I'm running scared.

FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS

In a talk presented at the 1968 ALA Conference, Mae Graham, Maryland state school library supervisor, reported results from a pilot use of evaluation forms developed by the U. S. Office of Education to evaluate the impact of ESEA Title II grant programs. Here's her sampling of student replies to two key questions:

