
GREENSBORO SCHOOL LIBRARIES ECONOMIZE THROUGH CENTRAL- IZED BUYING AND CATALOGING

The well known saying "there's economy in cooperation" was the motivating factor which led the Greensboro Board of Education to establish and provide for the support of a Central Library Department for the Public Schools. A study of the school library situation in the city had disclosed a gradual development from a few separate collections of miscellaneous books to a cen-

tralized library in each school; but indexes essential to the adequate use of the books had not been made. Only a few schools had complete catalogs and many of the shelf lists were temporary records made by the students or an untrained person.

The Administration was concerned that the books bought were not adequately used for enriching the teaching program. When it was pointed out that the best use of the collections could not be made until teachers and pupils were provided with full indexes of the material, especially subject indexes, the decision was made to have catalogs provided as speedily as possible.

In considering the most expedient method of making catalogs for 17 libraries, representing thousands of books, the whole question of cataloging came up for review. Research studies showed that the duties of reference work, supervision, book ordering, library instruction, etc., made it no longer practical for the individual school librarian to spend her time in the more technical aspects of library duties. Her time can be used so much more valuably in giving advice and assistance to faculty and students in the use of the library materials, and in studying and adding to her book collection in relation to the curriculum and reading interests of the school. They pointed out further that in a system made up of a number of schools, much clerical and technical work is duplicated when each librarian in the system catalogs the same book ordered by several libraries. To cite an example: "Gary, Indiana Central Department records for the school year 1935 through December 1937 show that of 7,703 books cataloged, 5,529 were duplicates. Without the Central Department, 13 different librarians would have had to catalog each book. From these figures it can be seen that almost three-fourths of the total cataloging time can be saved by duplication of cards centrally." Even if the individual librarian has clerical assistance for typing, it is a waste of professional time to have 13 librarians examine a book to determine its classification, form of entry, subject headings and analytics, when one librarian could do it for all. Where printed cards are not available, the use of a duplicating process from a master card in the Central Department (which would not be practical for one

school) reduces the typing of catalog cards by from 50 to 75 per cent. This also reduces the revision of typing to the revision of a single master card and the headings instead of revision of from one to twenty or more cards for each book. Not only has it been found that a considerable amount of typing and revising time is saved by this process, but that a less experienced typist can be used for typing headings on duplicated cards than for full cataloging typing.

In the light of these studies the Greensboro Board of Education established the Central Library Department. Book orders are made out by the individual librarians and sent to this department where they are pooled, thus insuring a better discount. All new books are shipped to the Central Department, examined for correct editions, perfect copies, correct prices and discounts, and then classified, cataloged, and fully prepared for circulation before being sent to the schools. The purchasing of shellac, alcohol, and paste in large containers is more economical than when bought in small quantities for individual schools. The catalog cards are sent from the Central Library department. All books to be rebound clear through this office and are prepared for circulation before being returned to the school. The library magazine orders also are handled by the office. The Department does the bookkeeping to hold the libraries within their quotas on new books, re-binding, supplies and magazines as determined by the total library budget.

The work on the catalogs for the thousands of books which were already in the libraries is done along with the current cataloging. It is of necessity a slow process.

MRS. MARY D. GRANT,
Cataloger and Library Consultant,
Greensboro Public Schools.