

THE IMPROVEMENT OF COLLEGE
INSTRUCTION THROUGH THE
USE OF THE LIBRARY¹

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This paper grew out of the situation reflected by 750,000 men of draft age, rejected on account of illiteracy, and by many college student failures due to limited vocabularies, low reading rate, and below-average reading comprehension. Attention was called to the fact that college students, served by the librarians present at the meeting, were less well equipped as readers than students in other regions. It is no matter of speculation that the South's students rank below the national average in reading rate and comprehension. Numerous tests show it plainly.

Attention was called to some of the measures which have been employed to improve instruction through library use. Those efforts have been made: (1) by agencies other than colleges and libraries, (2) by colleges, and (3) by libraries. The Carnegie Corporation and the General Education Board were cited as examples of agencies other than colleges and libraries whose efforts have been very constructive. Within the college, efforts have been primarily concerned with the curriculum according to the pattern followed. Honors programs, divisional arrangements, preceptorial programs, house plans, and other curriculum developments have necessarily been correlated with library use.

Of changes within the library which have promoted its use in instruction the first in importance is the attempt members of many library staffs have made to understand the education program of the college as it relates to the library and to participate in carrying it into effect.

¹ Address at the College and University Section Meeting, Biennial Meeting of the N.C.L.A., October 20, 1943. (Digest by G. F. Shepherd, Jr.)

Many advanced degrees in library science and other fields have been taken by librarians to increase their proficiency as librarians and as library counselors or advisers of students. Another change which librarians have helped to effect has involved the physical reorganization of library materials for specific uses, and the changing of buildings to secure conditions which are conducive to study. Theses and articles by librarians have constituted one of the principal sources of information available concerning various aspects of college-student reading. The findings should be placed in the hands of the college executives more often. In some instances the administration of the college library has been placed on a teaching rather than administrative or library-housekeeping level. The activities at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina Library were cited as notable examples of the "instructional phase."

In suggesting methods by which college study can be further improved through library use Dr. Wilson said that library participation in instruction activities was a partial achievement. Of other measures which should receive consideration he emphasized four: (1) The administration must be urged to provide funds for maintaining the library at a teaching rather than at a library-housekeeping level. The library must be considered as a teaching unit. (2) The library staff should become more expert in participating in the detection and removal of vocabulary and reading deficiencies of students and should work more with the faculty in removing such deficiencies. (3) The library should be more active in the guidance programs for the students especially through displays and readers' advisory services. (4) The library needs to feature in its display cases and on its open shelves the kinds of books which aid students in learning how to take notes, how to study, how to prepare bibliographies, and how

to utilize library materials in mastering a subject and in acquiring ability to write about it clearly and interestingly.

"To aid the student in extending his vocabulary and reading rate, to assist him in taking the fuzziness out of his thinking, to stimulate him in reading those works which inspire men to high living and thinking—those are chief among the shining goals of college librarianship."