

CLR-NEH Library Programs

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Introduction

Over the years, the library on the college or university campus has become less a part of the student's education, and has evolved into little more than a study hall. By not making an effort to become involved in campus activities, the libraries have done little to dispell their image as warehouses for information.¹ This image, for the most part, is reinforced by the attitudes and teaching methods of the faculty who do not look upon librarians as colleagues in the educational process, and who make minimal use of the library themselves.

Periodically, librarians who were aware of the declining role of the library, have attempted to redefine its interactive position within the academic community. One of the earliest plans was the Library College Concept, presented by Dr. Louis Shores in the 1930's. He visualized the Library College as:

... a college in which the dominant learning mode is independent study by the student in the library, bibliographically guided, intellectually aroused, and spiritually stirred by the faculty.²

Although the plan worked well in theory, the traditional lecture format of teaching prevented it from becoming a reality on more than just a few

campuses. More recently, many colleges have revised their curricula, moving away from the lecture form of teaching to seminars and independent studies programs for upper classmen and in some cases freshmen. This is seen to present the ideal opportunity for the library to update its role in the academic community and to become a more active, aggressive and influential part of the undergraduate's education.

In order for this goal to be accomplished, the student must be sufficiently knowledgeable in the way of the library to make it work for him. This presents a major obstacle for librarians to overcome: teaching the student (and professor) how to make effective use of the resources and materials in the library, especially the basic reference tools. This has been the topic of numerous publications, as shown by recent surveys in library literature. The conclusions reached by one survey done in the early 1960's were: 1) relatively few changes in the methods of instruction had occurred during the previous forty years; 2) no real solution to the instructing problem had been found; and 3) most of the literature was reptitious.³ A 1970 update of this survey reconfirmed the original findings.⁴

In 1969, the Council on Library Resources (CLR), in conjunction with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), began awarding matching grants to college libraries as part of a renewed effort to foster innovative programs. Few restrictions were made for the funded institutions:

It [the library] must have its own positive program; it must have dynamic and imaginative leadership. However, optimum effectiveness can be obtained only by coordinated endeavor on the part of administration, faculty, and library staff, based upon clearly defined institutional policies.⁵

While the development of basic orientation curricula was not a requirement of CLR-NEH, a close look at the proposals of a majority of the funded institutions reveals that it was recognized as a necessary foundation for the "coordinated endeavor" the institutions wished to establish. The funded programs proposed one or more of the following approaches to the problem: 1) development of a strong student reference-assistant program; 2) use of faculty members working in the library; and 3) creation of a separate professional position to integrate the library's activities with those of the rest of the campus.

The NEH and CLR provided matching funds of \$50,000 per year (\$100,000 in one case) for five years to enable about two dozen colleges and universities to experiment with such programs. This paper attempts to evaluate these programs in the light of available data which have been reported.

Student Reference Assistants

Students have traditionally participated in the library's operation in positions of minimal status. Some of the schools receiving CLR-NEH grants have increased or augmented the responsibility of these positions through a program of reference assistants. Four in particular — Brown University, Wabash College, Hampshire College and Washington and Lee University — make this use of student help a major part of their overall programs.

The decision by the four institutions to pursue this course was based on the belief that inexperienced student patrons will more readily approach their peers for assistance than face their professors or a librarian.⁶ Another reason for hiring students is to complement already operating independent study programs, a recent innovation of which is the shift to peer-based structures, where upper-classmen serve as guides to the newer students. Still another reason is that many of the questions asked at the reference desk can be easily answered by a student knowledgeable about the basic resources. Ideally, this would then free the professional librarian for other forms of communication with the faculty, and thus extend the visibility and influence of the library beyond its structural confines.⁷

The students who were to be chosen as reference assistants were first recommended by departments participating in the overall College-Library Program. It was expected that

these students were already competent in general research methods and had some knowledge of bibliographic sources and techniques of their major field. They also had to show an awareness of their own limitations.

All of these programs proposed some type of formal training, ranging from a weekend workshop at Wabash College to a whole semester's apprenticeship at Brown and Washington and Lee Universities. At the latter schools the longer training period was designed to acquaint the assistants with the entire library system by having them work briefly in each department, but with emphasis on reference and bibliographic searching techniques. The approach to this type of training at Hampshire and Wabash was to have the prospective assistants investigate searching problems under the guidance of the project librarian.

The student assistants at Brown and Washington and Lee spent the majority of their project time working on reference assignments in the library. At Brown they showed undergraduates how to search the literature and the card catalogue for particular topics. They had fixed office hours for students to come for assistance and consultation while researching term papers. Under the supervision of the reference staff, assistants compiled brief guides to the literature within their own field, for use by beginning majors.⁸ While working at the main reference desk, the assistants at Washington and Lee helped other students to make more productive use of reference tools.⁹

This help included instruction in using particular resources, assisting in literature searches, and making suggestions about general research techniques. In the remainder of their time, the assistants at both universities did library work for their individual departments: checking holdings and coordinating faculty ordering, compiling short guides and bibliographies, and even meeting with introductory classes to discuss library use.

The program at Hampshire College planned to continue the more traditional student reference assistants working in the library; it was also their intention to carry this approach outside the library. The proposal called for the placement, by the library, of specially trained "reference advisors" in the residence halls. Their additional training was to cover reference interviewing and other library related problems.¹⁰ It was hoped that these reference advisors would maintain a small reference collection in the dormitories for convenience.

Wabash College also planned to have student advisors in those residence halls that requested them. However, unlike Hampshire, the burden of the responsibility for choosing the advisors and publicizing their availability was to rest on the individual advisors and the dormitory residents.¹¹ The majority of these reference assistants' time was spent working with the faculty in a program of Freshman Seminars. They were to assist the lower classmen in the thematic aspects of investigating a

seminar topic. Instruction in the use of the resource tools remains the domain of the professional librarian.

Professors in the Library

Many librarians believe that one possible stimulus for more resourceful use of the library is the establishment of closer ties with the teaching faculty. Theoretically, "the 'professor in the library' can open many doors to which the 'professor in the classroom' can only refer by way of recommendation."¹² The former brings with him subject expertise and searching techniques which can assist the student in his research work. Three of the recipient institutions, Washington and Lee University, the University of Richmond, and Occidental College, proposed to take some professors out of their classrooms and put them into the library. In all three instances, the participating faculty were selected from the social science or humanities disciplines. The teaching faculty were given release time and freed from some of their teaching obligations to compensate for their library work. The length of a faculty members's library assignment ranged from one semester to the full five years.

The roles of these faculty members seemed to fall into one of two broad categories: that of subject specialist reviewing the library's holdings, and that of consultant working with the students. While there was generally some overlap of these duties, the participating schools' programs usually emphasized one or the other of them.

At Washington and Lee the participating faculty prepared

bibliographies of the basic resources within their own fields for beginning majors. In addition, they were engaged, with the reference staff, in team teaching intensive bibliography courses, described as:

Introduction to information sources [bibliographic tools] and library services, and how to use them most effectively, followed by instruction in specialized research methods and subject bibliography for the major fields represented in the class.¹³

This aspect of the program has had a positive impact on the awareness of student and other faculty of the importance of bibliographic competence.¹⁴ Other reference librarians have been asked to give mini-bibliography courses in non-participating departments, and students have been known to recommend the course to their peers.

At the University of Richmond, the faculty members' jobs were three-fold: 1) developing library-centered teaching, e.g., faculty and librarians team teaching, or use of librarians in the classroom; 2) planning and implementing a ten-year collection development program; and 3) assisting in reference service. The faculty participants spent only a small portion of their time in reference assistance, and this was mainly learning about basic resources and assisting students who were doing independent or interdisciplinary work.¹⁵

At Occidental College, much like some of the other schools, the professors were largely concerned with assisting the freshmen and sophomores in learning efficient research techniques. Faculty were also expected to survey the library's

holdings in their own discipline and to develop ways of increasing the use of these holdings. What was especially unique about this program was the training each professor was to undertake. In the term prior to his appointment, he was to work in the library under the guidance of a librarian to improve his own knowledge and skills with the references resources.¹⁶

At two schools a faculty member was designated to oversee the work of other faculty participants and to make on-going or final evaluations of the overall program. This was the Associate Project Director at Washington and Lee and the Project Associate at Richmond.

New Librarians

Almost all of the institutions that received CLR-NEH grants proposed, as an integral part of their projects, either to create a new librarian position or to redefine an existing one. It was to be the responsibility of this position to acquaint all students with the libraries' facilities and to give special attention to the bibliographic needs of students doing independent projects.

At some institutions these special librarians were to have other duties as well. At Occidental the Librarian-at-Large was to assist the faculty in rating the bibliographies of their students work. At Davidson the Coordinator of Library Resources for Extended Studies was to advise students and faculty on the practicality of research projects in terms of the

library's holdings.¹⁷ At Hampden-Sydney, the Reference-Librarian Coordinator offered special guidance to students in evaluating the worth of sources material. He also has developed an orientation program to meet the particular needs of freshman.¹⁸

The University of Colorado hired two "subject specialist" librarians, a portion of whose time was to be spent giving individual counseling to students and faculty in participating departments.¹⁹ Together with the faculty, they were to develop instructional aids in library use.

Eastern Michigan University's two new Orientation Librarians intended to create an orientation program which would go beyond the traditional building and location tour. These librarians have met with freshman and sophomore classes to give bibliographic instruction at times when such lessons would be of particular value.²⁰ It has been found that when library instruction is coordinated with, and limited to, the demands of current assignments, students respond with more interest and more readily remember and use the information they received.²¹ Before the librarian at Eastern Michigan was to meet with a class, a data sheet covering such information as course topics and titles of specific sources requested by the professor, was to be filled out, in order better to acquaint the librarian with the specific needs of the class.

The Orientation Librarians also wrote study guides for topics of general interest for distribution to the

students. These guides provided a list of general sources and possible reference headings for a variety of topics, specified for each the location of relevant reference books and stack area for more general sources, and suggested the name of a librarian to ask for assistance should it be needed.²²

The Librarians at Hampshire College chose to make use of special audiovisual techniques to present their orientation program. In one attempt, the College's video system was being used to change the patron's image of the library:

... drawing on the TV commercial, Sesame Street and other interesting formats, we are attempting to produce a wide variety of presentations showing the Library Center as a human if not humorous place.²³

While it was recognized that the initial results had been amateurish and experimental in nature, it was felt that these efforts were still worthwhile.²⁴ More successful were the slide-tape shows which gave instructions in the use of specific references, and video tapes which listed and reviewed the pertinent resources of a particular field.

Many of the proposals recognized that it is not only the students, but the faculty as well, who fail to appreciate fully the librarians' expertise, and who are remiss in putting the libraries' facilities and staff to full use. Some of the programs, therefore, planned to extend an effort to help the professor pursue his personal research interests or improve his own bibliographic skills.

Eastern Michigan's Outreach Program proposed to sell the faculty on the librarians' abilities.²⁵ To this end the Orientation Librarians developed a "Faculty Profile" which was filled out for each professor they interviewed. Among the information recorded were the professor's subject interests, his areas of research, and the journals he read or subscribed to. This information was to help the librarian to stay in touch with the professor and keep him up to date on new acquisitions or even developments in his field.

Hampden-Sydney College invited a library school faculty member to direct a one week seminar each summer for the duration of the program in order to orient the faculty to the library's resources. The professors were given an introduction to the general reference tools as well as a bibliographic assignment in which they closely examined the resources of a particular topic.²⁶

Summary

Although the limited data available make evaluation of this program difficult, all of the programs discussed here appear to have made an impact on their respective institutions, some of which were positive. This is not to say that the programs have not been without limitations and failures. All of the schools found it necessary to make some modifications in their programs as they went along. The attitude of the students towards learning in general and the reluctance of the faculty to become involved in the

library and in a cooperative endeavor with librarians were the more difficult obstacles to overcome.

While there is no easy solution, involving the faculty more directly in the library's work has shown positive results. The use of team teaching by the faculty and librarians, as well as the availability of a faculty member in the library has spurred other faculty members to make greater use of the library and the talents of the librarians. In at least two of the schools, Richmond and Occidental, the faculty who participated in the library program reported a new appreciation for the work librarians do and the service the library can render to students and faculty.

The programs that relied on increased student reference assistants have also proved beneficial in increasing student use of the library. As one librarian aptly put it:

Library assistants have become goodwill ambassadors for the library and their influence will bring others into the library.²⁷

The overall success of the programs which developed primarily around a new position appears more doubtful. Much depends on the personality of the individual. Collection development often competed with orientation and reference work with the students and faculty for the librarians' attention. Both jobs are important to the library's role on the campus, but to have them handled by one librarian sometimes meant that he would be unable fully to realize the potential of either job.

A number of the schools have now completed their five-year grants and

are in the process of evaluating the results. The NEH and CLR have also sent evaluators to some of the institutions.²⁸ The initial experiments were encouraging in some schools, less so in others. Work at Eastern Michigan University with its annual orientation conferences has apparently stimulated a great deal of interest in bibliographic instruction and participants in the conferences have often been librarians and/or faculty members from grantee institutions.²⁹ What the reports do not reveal, as indicated by one evaluator, is the sense of excitement and educational progress which faculty, students, and librarians on a given campus have experienced as a result of the College Library Program.³⁰ What is now needed is a report from all these institutions on the effectiveness of their approach and the intangible results which have occurred from library instruction. Until such case studies have been written for each college or university no comprehensive evaluation is possible. Colleagues in such institutions should be encouraged to share their successes and failures with the library community as a basis for further advancement of the profession.

Footnotes

¹Swarthmore College, "Report of the Special Committee on Library Policy," in *Critique of a College*, (Swarthmore, Penna., 1967), p. 337.

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³Wabash College Library, "A Proposal to Increase the Effectiveness of the Library in the Educational Program of Wabash College," (Unpublished), p. 6.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵Council on Library Resources, *17th Annual Report*, (Washington, D.C. 1973), p. 26.

¹⁰Hampshire College Library, "Program to Develop Methods of Orienting the Library to the User," (Unpublished), p. 7.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹²Brown University Library, "Graduate Reference Assistant Program," (pamphlet), p. 1.

¹³Washington and Lee University Library, "Interim Report 1," (Unpublished), 1971-72, p. 5.

¹⁴Robert S. Taylor, "Orienting the Library to the User at Hampshire College," *Drexel Library Quarterly*, VII (July/October 1971), p. 1.

¹⁵Wabash College Library, "Quarterly Reports to the Council on Library Resources," No. 7, (Unpublished), p. 6.

¹⁶Washington and Lee University Library, "Interim Report 1," (Unpublished), p. 5.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁸University of Richmond Library, "Library Faculty Partnership," (Unpublished), 1973, p. 2.

¹⁹Occidental College Library, "A Proposal to the Council on Library Resources for a Grant to Develop Greater and More Effective Use of the College Library in the Educational Program of the College," (Unpublished), 1973, p. 9-10.

²⁰Council on Library Resources, *17 Annual Report*, p. 27.

²¹Hampden-Sydney College Library, "Progress Report on The Council on Library Resources-National Endowment for the Humanities Grant," (Unpublished), 1974, p. 5.

²²University of Colorado Library, "Proposal to the Council on Library Resources, Inc. for a Program to Improve and Increase Student and Faculty Involvement in Library Use," (Unpublished), 1972, p. 2-3.

²³Council on Library Resources, *Recent Developments*, No. 296 (October 4, 1970), p. 2.

²⁴Guy Lyle, *The Administration of the College Library*, 3rd Edition, (New York, 1961), p. 153.

²⁵A. P. Marshall, "Library Outreach: The Program at Eastern Michigan University," *Drexel Library Quarterly*, VII (July/October 1971), p. 349.

²⁶Hampshire College Library, "Progress Report, First Year, 1970-71," (Unpublished), p. 4.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁸Marshall, *Op. cit.*, p. 348.

²⁹Interview with Dr. Fred Roper, Professor of Library Science, University of North Carolina, May, 1974.

³⁰Wabash College Library, "Quarterly Reports . . ." No. 7, p. 2.

³¹In the summer, 1975, Harold Cannon from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Foster Mohrhardt from the Council on Library Resources, and Edward G. Holley from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, visited twelve institutions in order to make recommendations on the future of the program. Their reports, while useful, have not been published.

³²Eastern Michigan University, *Papers presented at the First Annual Conference on Library Orientation held at Eastern Michigan University*, May 7, 1971; *Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference on Library Orientation for Academic Libraries*, May 4-5, 1972; *Proceedings of the Third Annual Conference on Library Orientation for Academic Libraries*, May 3-4, 1973; *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Conference on Library Orientation for Academic Libraries*, May 9-11, 1974, (Ann Arbor, Mich., Pierian Press, 1972-75).

³³Conversations with Dean Edward G. Holley regarding the eight institutions he visited, December, 1976.