

Building School Media Collections

Institute for Training in Librarianship

MARY FRANCES K. JOHNSON

"Emergence of new media formats . . . proliferation of materials . . . new marketing approaches . . . time pressures . . . curriculum demands . . . changes in state and federal funding . . . these and other forces make the selection of materials in print and audiovisual forms both more critically important and more complex. The Institute on Building School Media Collections offers opportunity for thirty-five practicing school librarians and school library supervisors to extend and upgrade their competencies in selection of instructional materials."

So went the proposal for an Institute for Training in Librarianship, to be funded under the Higher Education Act of 1965, Title II-B, prepared by the Library Education/Instructional Media program, School of Education, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, in the fall of 1969. Spring 1970 brought notification of the grant award for the Institute, designed to help participants accomplish the following objectives: (1) to develop increased knowledge and understanding of trends in curriculum and instruction and their implications for school media collections; (2) to become better informed about content and format factors influencing students' preferences in materials; (3) to develop competency in use of criteria, selection tools, and processes for evaluation and acquisition of materials; (4) to extend their knowledge of currently available materials and media formats, with emphasis on materials in critical areas; and (5) to gain competence in defining and administering effective selection policies and procedures.

Participants were recruited during the fall of 1970, with fourteen hundred mailings to schools, school systems, and other "contacts" within the stipulated geographic area

to be served (roughly, a 100-mile radius of Greensboro). The thirty-five participants selected represented twenty North Carolina and six Virginia school systems, and included elementary, middle, junior high, and senior high school media specialists as well as one school library supervisor.

The Institute met for ten all-day (Saturday) sessions, beginning February 20 and ending May 1, 1971. MRS. MARY FRANCES K. JOHNSON of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNC-G) served as director. CORA PAUL BOMAR, UNC-G, and MRS. PAULINE MYRICK, Director of Educational Media, Moore County Schools, served as study group leaders. Visiting lecturers for Institute sessions included MARY V. GAVER (Rutgers University); MRS. ALICE RUSK (Baltimore, Maryland, City Schools); MAE GRAHAM (Maryland State Department of Education); J. W. CARRUTH (North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction); DR. RICHARD L. DARLING (Columbia University); and VIRGINIA H. MATHEWS (National Book Committee). UNC-G lecturers and staff included DR. MARIAN P. FRANKLIN, DR. DWIGHT L. CLARK, III, and LOU BRADLEY of the School of Education; DR. W. HUGH HAGA-

MAN, MICHAEL MOLEND, and M. SANGSTER PARROTT of the Library Education/Instructional Media faculty; MRS. ELLEN DAY and MRS. DOROTHY RHAME of the Center for Instructional Media.

At the opening session on February 20, MARY GAVER presented a keynote lecture on bases for building school media collections, in which she emphasized that collections and programs are two sides of one coin: the building of these must go hand in hand. School media collections, she stated, must support what Edgar Dale has called "the new literacy"—the ability to communicate through each of three modes: print, audio, and video. Collections must also support the new concept of use, i.e., that materials are intended primarily for individual use rather than for teacher presentation purposes. Collections that offer all media formats are essential to helping schools break away from a print bias, from the false assumption that everyone has "primacy" in learning by the reading of print. Here Miss Gaver quoted Neil Postman's statement that "the electric plug is causing all hell to break loose—while schools are still pushing the old technology."

Responsibilities of the school media specialist in building collections, as identified by Miss Gaver, must include the following functions. First, taking leadership in determining and anticipating the needs of students and teachers (rather than to "only stand and wait"). Second, "reading"—by which is meant reading, listening, viewing—continuously in order to develop and maintain competency in selection—an indispensable base achieved by planned approaches. Minimum approaches,

Miss Gaver suggested, include in-depth exploration of materials in special areas of content or form, selected on the basis of personal interests—or even of disinterest; and multimedia comparative reviewing of materials. Third, coordinating the development of a written selection policy at the school building level.

MRS. ALICE RUSK, guest lecturer on March 6, discussed the building of collections that are responsive to student populations served, exploring with the group dimensions of relevance in materials, with emphasis on the selection of multiethnic media. Guidelines offered by Mrs. Rusk included the following points. (1) Be a good listener to teachers, for nothing quite takes the place of front-line experience to keep up with "where it's at." (2) Ensure the participation of those whom the selection process serves. (3) Evaluate materials *for*—whether or not *about*—multiethnic groups, and remember that provision of multiethnic materials must not be limited to materials about groups in "our" community: world understanding is sought. (4) Pay attention to social, economic, and cultural forces affecting the children of minority ethnic groups. (5) Cultivate the perspective that "different is different," rather than the view that different means inferior or superior. (6) Recognize the basic, common emotional needs of all children. (7) Support new curriculum emphases. (8) Apply sound criteria in evaluating multiethnic materials, emphasizing sound characterization, credible plot, themes based in contemporary sociological forces. (9) Recognize and respond to students' current interests. (10) Follow up selection by interpreting materials and their uses.



Mary V. Gaver, Rutgers University

MARY GAVER returned to the Institute on March 20 to discuss elements of the selection policy document, guidelines for its development, means to safeguard intellectual freedom, and the formulation of policies for critical areas of the collection.

MAE GRAHAM, visiting lecturer on March 27 on long-range planning for school media collections, discussed the implications of Planning, Programming, Budgeting Systems (PPBS) for the school media center collection and its development, and led participants in the identification of objectives for collections and myths that must be dispelled in order to reach objectives. Among the myths tackled by Miss Graham were: (1) the concept of a "balanced" collection in terms of a stipulated distribution of materials among classifications, (2) the acceptance of numbers (of items per pupil) as guarantees that a collection meets users' needs, (3) higher status for the user of print, (4) higher status for the user of hardback books, (5) the need for separate shelving of print and audiovisual materials, and (6) the view of individual schools' collections as being self-sufficient.



J. W. Carruth, State Department of Public Instruction

J. W. CARRUTH, on April 3, discussed the roles of local, state, and federal funds in the development of school media collections and reviewed trends and changes in funding at each of these levels. Also on April 3, Dwight Clark analyzed approaches to curriculum—traditional, structural, behavioral, and environmental—and analyzed each in terms of objectives, emphases, organizational patterns, materials needed, and type of library program fostered.



Ellen W. Day (UNC-G);
Richard L. Darling
(Columbia University);
Dorothy Rhame (UNC-G)

RICHARD DARLING, guest lecturer on April 17, discussed system-level and system-wide approaches used in the evaluation of materials, identifying the following as impor-

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tant areas of system-level support to individual schools in selection of media: (1) providing an examination center for new media, (2) providing inservice education to staff (teachers, media specialists, administrators, consultants) in the evaluation and use of media, (3) serving as a clearinghouse for information on new materials, and (4) disseminating the results of review and evaluation efforts.

VIRGINIA MATHEWS, who spoke to the Institute on the Right to Read Effort, timed her visit on April 24 to coincide with National Library Week, for which she is director, and arrived direct from the International Reading Association conference in Atlantic City, where she had given the premiere presentation of the new sound filmstrip set, "Sound and Light for the Right to Read." Her discussion gave participants new awareness of the purposes, approaches, and emphases of this national effort—including roles and responsibilities of school librarians, and the contributions being made by volunteers working in schools and media centers.

In addition to large-group presentations by visiting lecturers and local staff, the Institute programming included work in study groups in which participants were assisted in drafting a selection policy for their individual schools; choice of interest group sessions on such topics as approaches in reading instruction, selection of microforms, film evaluation, and selection of audio-

visual equipment; and independent study (too little time for the latter, in most opinions!). At the final session on May 1, subgroups from the three study groups shared recommendations from areas of their special investigation, which included guidelines for reevaluation of existing collections, uses of paperbacks, meeting the needs of slow/reliant readers, ways for involving teachers and students in selection, meeting problems of curriculum change, and promoting materials by means of interest centers.

Tape recordings of large-group lectures and selected interest group presentations have been placed in the audio tape library, Division of Educational Media, State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, from which copies may be obtained (by purchase or by supplying blank tapes for duplication).

Evaluations made by participants and staff support the conclusion that the Institute was a profitable experience for all concerned. Each participant went away with a draft selection policy for his/her school in hand, together with guidelines for ways of working with other school and school system personnel for review/revision/adoption of the policy. Contributions to each of the other program objectives were recognized. Other benefits emphasized by participants were the stimulus provided by visiting lecturers and, most of all, the opportunity for sustained interaction with other practitioners. In short, the Institute proved to be worth the investment of ten full Saturdays last spring—and a fall reunion of the group is being planned.

STUDY GROUPS OF INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING IN LIBRARIANSHIP



Study Group I—Miss Bomar, Leader



Study Group II—Mrs. Johnson, Leader



Study Group III—Mrs. Myrick, Leader