

North Carolina School Libraries

A Look at the Past, Present and Future

by Cora Paul Bomar

In this fiftieth anniversary issue of *North Carolina Libraries* it is fitting that an article be included on library services to school age children and youth. Researching the topic became an overwhelming task because data and descriptive information are scattered throughout many sources. Information was solicited from school library media personnel in addition to the archival and current documents studied. This article attempts to identify factors influencing school library development, but the definitive history of North Carolina school libraries has yet to be written.

The school library, like the school of which it is an integral part, exists for one basic purpose: the education of children and youth. Its mission is to provide a library program that ensures that each student acquires information skills necessary to become a productive citizen in a democratic society, and an independent learner throughout life. The mission remains constant, although implementation of the mission changes as influenced by economic, political, and sociological conditions; technological developments; and the school environment. Terminology also changes as education and library vocabularies respond to the current environment. The term "library" will be used in this article, for a school library at its best incorporates current terminology in describing its services.

Libraries in schools were reported as early as 1809, but it was not until 1898 that impetus was given to school libraries through a booklist included in the state course of study, coupled with a strong plea for teachers to take the lead in establishing libraries. Although private academies usually maintained libraries, only a few public schools included space for a library in new or renovated buildings. The year 1901 marks the date that North Carolina established continuous financial support for public school libraries. In that year, the State Department of Public Instruction (SDPI) Superintendent J. Y. Joyner per-

sueded the General Assembly to appropriate \$2500 to help purchase library books for free public rural schools, \$10 to a school if the community and the county board of education each contributed \$10.

As early as 1913, the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS) began its positive influence on school library development by including school libraries in its accreditation standards for secondary schools. SACS accreditation has been highly coveted because of its cooperatively developed standards and self-evaluation program, coupled with the fact that the decision to meet SACS standards is a choice made by the local school system.

The first state standards for high school libraries, formulated in 1921, specified a minimum of three hundred library books; and three years later, in 1924, standards for elementary schools were established. By 1926 there were still only four full-time, trained librarians in North Carolina schools. At the 1927 organizational meeting of the School Librarians Section of the North Carolina Education Association, a resolution was passed to be submitted to SDPI stating that each 1AA high school should have a full-time librarian holding an A teaching certificate. In addition to teacher certification, it was recommended that school librarians should have an additional six weeks training in library science. This resolution, later adopted by SDPI, was a significant step in school

library development.

Through the efforts of Dr. Louis Round Wilson and Dr. J. Henry Highsmith, the General Education Board of the Rockefeller Foundation allotted funds to SDPI in 1930 for the employment of a state school library adviser for five years. On July 1, 1930, Mary Teresa Peacock (Douglas) took office as the first State School Library Adviser. Her duties were to encourage, promote, and oversee school libraries by interpreting, improving, and extending school library service. Douglas had the vision, the drive, and the ability to instill in the minds of school administrators, PTA leaders, boards of education, and the general public the concept that school libraries are essential to good teaching and learning. She gave leadership to every facet of school library development and took advantage of every opportunity to promote school libraries.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, SDPI utilized the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Nearly 1000 schools participated in a well-organized WPA program that provided library aides to establish and operate school libraries under the supervision of district librarians. WPA workers also built or renovated school buildings which included space for libraries, and Douglas reviewed plans for these school library facilities.

The move to a state-operated school system in



Mary Teresa Peacock Douglas.
Photo from ALA Bulletin 37 (April 1943); 127.)

1931-32 strengthened SDPI and gave the

State School Library Adviser mandated responsibility for supervising school library development statewide. Since that time, SDPI has been the major force directing school library development in North Carolina, and funds for maintaining the office of State School Library Adviser (currently called the Division of Media and Technology) have been included in the regular SDPI budget since 1935.

In 1941, Mary T. Grant, the first supervisor of Greensboro school libraries, established centralized purchasing, cataloging, and processing of all library materials, making Greensboro the first local school system

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in the state to have centralized technical services. Greensboro school superintendent Ben L. Smith shared Grant's belief that librarians in the schools should spend their time assisting students and teachers in using the library, not in processing materials. SDPI encouraged other local systems to follow Greensboro's example, but was never able to secure statewide funding for centralized technical services.

Although a qualified school librarian is an essential ingredient in providing library service, without a state allotment for school library positions, employment of school librarians was a local school system expenditure, or a position taken from the state classroom allotment. Even so, the more affluent local systems and high schools with SACS membership employed full-time librarians in the 1940s. (See TABLE: NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL LIBRARIES) By 1947, Appalachian State Teachers College (ASU), North Carolina College (NCCU), and East Carolina Teachers College (ECU) had established library education programs in addition to the one at the University of North Carolina (UNC-CH). Following the 1945 ALA standards, *School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow*, the 1947 North Carolina standards for school libraries reflected a library program for grades one through twelve, and the components essential to library service: the collection, the physical space, and the librarian.

Notwithstanding a war and a depression, lack of personnel, and inadequate funding, North Carolina school library development moved forward under the firm persuasion of Mary Peacock Douglas, until she left SDPI in June 1947. Eloise Camp (Melton) served in the office until August 1950. The office was then left vacant until Cora Paul Bomar was employed one year later, in August 1951.

Bomar continued the services and programs established by Mary Peacock Douglas and Eloise Camp Melton. The momentum generated by Douglas and Melton created a backlog of requests for assistance from schools throughout North Carolina. An assistant state school library adviser was added in 1953, giving the staff more opportunities to generate ideas and projects to demonstrate effective school library programs. In 1954, SDPI produced a 16mm film, *Let's Visit School Libraries*, an amateur production featuring a cross section of North Carolina school libraries. The film was used throughout the state and prints were purchased by other states, the U.S. Office of Education, and UNESCO.

In the early 1950s, few elementary schools had central libraries and many turned to SDPI for assistance. The state school library advisers always found a space that could be converted to a library. Sometimes it was an auditorium or vacant classroom; other times it might be a hallway or cafeteria. Once a library had been established and made operational, plans for a more adequate facility were usually generated.

Elementary school library development was influenced to a great extent by the SACS elementary school accreditation program. Under the leadership of Dr. Madeline Tripp, the SACS North Carolina Committee on Elementary Education was a dynamic force in elementary school library development, especially with regard to the increase of elementary school library positions.

The 1961 General Assembly appropriated funds, for the first time, to support

special teaching positions in six categories, including school library positions. By 1961, North Carolina had officially recognized that the services of a school librarian are as basic to a good library program as the classroom teacher is to instruction. Of the 2648 positions allotted in 1964, the top category was that of school librarian: 782 or 33.7 per cent were school librarian allotments.

It was in the 1960s that more school librarians became active in NCLA and AASL, including librarians in private independent schools. In 1960, the first Biennial School Library Work Conference, sponsored by NCLA School and Children's Section (North Carolina Association of School Librarians), was held in Durham. Over the years, these NCASL work conferences have provided school library media personnel with the opportunity to gain new knowledge and to share promising practices.

As school and public library service to children and youth expanded, SDPI and the State Library recognized the need to discuss patterns of relationships between school and public libraries, and to reexamine the practice of direct public library bookmobile service to schools during the school day. This limited book circulation was often accepted in lieu of establishing elementary school libraries. Both SDPI and the State Library were promoting library services for all children and youth,

but the two agencies had done little planning on how best to serve the same clientele. After several conferences in 1957-58 the two agencies formulated guidelines for cooperation. The guidelines specified that book loans to schools should be group loans to the school library; that the books should be cooperatively selected by the school and public library staffs; that school and public librarians should plan together for student use of the public library; and that con-

sideration should be given to sharing resources. The conferences represent the first effort of the two state agencies to determine how best to serve school age children and youth.



Rural school library at Bobbit, Vance County, N.C., c. 1904. (Photo courtesy North Carolina Collection, University of N.C. Library at Chapel Hill.)

The National Defense Education Act (NDEA), passed by Congress in 1958, provided federal funds for acquisition of instructional materials and equipment, including library resources; and for fellowship and training institutes for teachers and librarians.

It was not until the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) that legislation specifically designed to strengthen school library services was included in a federal law (ESEA Title II - School Library Resources, Textbooks and other Instructional Materials). For the first time SDPI, local school systems, and individual schools were mandated to plan for school improvement. (The requirement to plan, set priorities, and account for outcomes introduced the concept that is the foundation of the current legislation, Senate Bill 2, The School Improvement and Accountability Act.) SDPI school library staff was given the responsibility of administering the ESEA Title II North Carolina State Plan. ESEA and NDEA funds, coupled with an increase in state appropriations, provided opportunities for school library development that had been only envisioned earlier.

SDPI led the way in encouraging schools to strengthen, expand, and introduce new services. In 1965, SDPI organized the Division of Educational Media, including a staff of thirty-six, with the State School Library Supervisor as Director. The Division included School Library Supervision, Audiovisual Education, Instructional Television, Center for Learning Resources (Media Examination Center), Educational Information Library, and Federal Programs for Instructional Materials. Existing services were strengthened and new programs were initiated, i.e., the first comprehensive ERIC research service, the Demonstration School Libraries Project, the Educational Media Mobile program, and media examination services. The term "media," which laid the foundation for a new vocabulary describing school library services, was introduced during this time period.

It has been said that the 1960s was the Golden Age of school library development. Increasing awareness by school administrators, local citizens, state and federal agencies; increasing state and local funding; and an infusion of federal funds gave North Carolina school librarians opportunities to strengthen existing library services and to initiate new services that would contribute to the education of children and youth. The largest increase in library book collections and professional personnel occurred during the 1960s. (See TABLE: NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL LIBRARIES.)

In August 1969, Cora Paul Bomar resigned as Director of the SDPI Division of Educational Media.

By 1970, North Carolina was ready to move forward in implementing the 1969 AASL/DAVI *Standards for School Media Programs* in which all instructional media, print and nonprint, were recognized as equally important. James W. Carruth, Sr., the new director, was an audiovisual specialist who was well qualified to direct this movement. The SDPI library media staff assisted local school systems in incorporating all media formats into the

library media collection by providing guidelines for selection, acquisition, cataloging, circulation, and use of media in teaching and learning; and by providing staff development opportunities for local systems and for individual library media personnel. Terminology moved away from library and librarian to media center and media coordinator, terms to usher in the new age, but terms that were easily misunderstood by the general public.

In 1974, Carruth left SDPI and Elsie L. Brumback became Director of Educational Media (Media and Technology Services). Under her leadership the staff continued to assist local school systems in developing programs for media services, while retaining emphasis on the building-level librarian's role in student mastery of listening, viewing, and reading skills.

Standards began to focus on replacing quantitative requirements with guidelines for program development, while still recognizing that adequate funding is necessary for providing essential resources. *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*, the 1988 standards developed by AASL and AECT, and the state guidelines *Learning Connections* use this same approach. How much and how many cannot measure

what good the school library does. The true measure is in the services it provides to make a difference in the education of children and youth.

More and more, an awareness evolved that qualified professionals are essential to program development. As early as 1947, it was recognized that graduate level preparation was needed to allow the library education student time to acquire a foundation in the liberal arts, teacher education, and library science. By the 1980s, certification specifications for the school librarian (school media coordinator) were upgraded to require a master's degree in library media education. This opened the door for the school library media professional to become qualified as an information specialist, a teacher, and an instructional consultant who can plan, manage, and lead. The responsibility for preparing the individual to fulfill these roles rests with library media education programs.

The SDPI library media staff has taken a major role in introducing new technologies in the school library media program. In 1983, the Division developed a legislative model resulting in a state appropriation of \$28.6 million for a statewide instructional computer program; and in 1986, \$3 million to begin a Distance Learning by Satellite program. New technologies have the potential to revolutionize school library media services by: (1) freeing the professional of time-consuming clerical tasks; (2) providing unlimited information through electronic information retrieval networking systems; (3) providing computer-assisted and interactive video instruction. To reach this potential will take time, money, and expertise. It will become increasingly imperative that SDPI and the State Library join forces in providing statewide networking capable of accessing and sharing resources for school age children and youth, without unnecessary duplication.

Over the years, selection of library media has remained with the individual school. Services of the SDPI Examination Center; recommended selection aids; official local school system selection policies; school media advisory committees; and knowledge



Fourth graders in Erwin, N.C., school library, 1953. (Photo courtesy North Carolina Collection, University of N.C. Library at Chapel Hill.)

of the school curriculum have resulted in keeping North Carolina school library media collections above average in quality and quantity, with censorship problems held to a minimal level. A viable current book collection will remain, in the foreseeable future, the essential resource for children and youth as they become literate; however, with the introduction of expensive computer technology, safeguarding an adequate book budget will not be easy. In 1987, North Carolina public schools spent almost \$12 million on audiovisual, media, and computer equipment and software, while spending only a little over \$8.5 million for books and periodicals. The average spent on books per pupil in 1987 was barely enough to purchase one book per child. If books wear out or are discarded at the usual rate, book collections will decrease in number. This poses a dilemma for schools since an adequate supply of reading material is necessary if our children are to become literate.

In the 1980s, North Carolina became aware of the critical need to improve the educational system. Following the national pattern, many groups, individual researchers, legislative bodies, and the SDPI looked at public education with critical eyes. SDPI, with statewide input from local school systems and education-related groups, examined the status of North Carolina's educational program. As a result, the Basic Education Plan (BEP) was developed to upgrade education statewide by designing a comprehensive course of study and by identifying the resources essential to its implementation. School library media services are addressed in BEP's major publications: *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* and *North Carolina Competency Based Curriculum - Teacher Handbook*, which includes a comprehensive library media/computer skills curriculum for grades K-12. Senate Bill 2 gives local school systems and individual schools a major voice in decision making based on systematic planning and site-based management. The state accreditation program and performance appraisal provide a base for accountability for all education personnel, including school library media personnel.

The addition of SDPI regional consultants in 1983-84, and the August regional workshops initiated in 1975, have provided staff development to more than 2000 professionals. These services, along with the state certification requirement of master's level library media preparation, can equip library media professionals to assume leadership roles in school improvement.

The following comparative statistics were taken from library media reports submitted to the SDPI from North Carolina schools and local school systems. Some schools did not submit reports and the methodology for collecting data has changed from time to time. Nevertheless, a study of these data would represent trends in school library development.

TABLE: NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL LIBRARIES
Personnel and Library Books

Item	1930-31	1946-47	1967-68	1986-87
Library Personnel				
Professionals	11	151	1755	2175
Teacher-Librarians	253	587	n/a	n/a
LEA Supervisors	0	15	90	67
Support Staff	0	n/a	500+	1374
Books*				
Total Books	855,785	3,634,534	12,208,527	16,734,905
Books per Pupil	2.8	4.73	10.27	15

* Comparative data are not available for all media resources and equipment. The 1987 Annual Educational Media and Technology Report listed 75 categories of media and equipment (traditional and newer technologies).

By the end of the 1980s, library media services were being recognized as an integral component of the K-12 curriculum. Both SDPI and NCASL provide dynamic leadership in promoting this concept, but the greatest influence on North Carolina school libraries has been the commitment of individuals, from the school house to the State House, who have worked diligently for development of school library media services. Beginning with Mary Peacock Douglas in the 1940s, professionals have participated on major ALA and AASL committees and have been elected to ALA and AASL offices, giving North Carolina a voice in national school library media center development.

Providing quality education for children and youth will be a major concern in the 1990s and beyond. Accomplishing this will require major changes. School library media services must be included in these changes IF the library media center is to remain the information source for the learner. This will require a different approach to library media education; to patterns of relationships between school and public libraries; to collection development, as electronic information retrieval is established; and to personnel deployment. Opportunities will be unlimited for the school library media center to implement its mission to provide a library program ensuring that each student acquires information skills necessary to become a productive citizen in a democratic society and an independent learner throughout life.

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