

THE NEW LOOK FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

by

RICHARD L. DARLING*

It may seem pretentious and premature to talk about a new look for school libraries or school librarians. Critics of the school library find little new about them and much that they would change. In 1962 J. Lloyd Trump said that "Today's libraries and librarians are too much on the fringes of education."¹ In January, 1966, he still described the school library as a "sideshow," not a part of the main attraction, though he predicts a time when it will be otherwise.² A Florida secondary school principal, whose name slips my memory at the moment, would like to put his librarians in cages, hardly evidence of a new look, although a caged librarian may be somewhat unusual.

In fairness, it must be said that these critics are bitter about school libraries not because they fail to perceive their value, but because the libraries they know have not achieved their potential in supporting instruction and in improving the education of boys and girls. But their recent experience with school libraries must be limited. To judge otherwise is to accuse them of shortsightedness, or of willful disregard of a mounting body of evidence contrary to their opinions. For there is a new look in school libraries, a new ferment of ideas, a new excitement. To the challenge of the past decade of change in education, school librarians have responded by providing new services and by making the materials of instruction more accessible to students and teachers than ever before.

The first standards for school libraries issued by the American Association of School Librarians — *School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow* — stood for 15 years, from 1945 until *Standards for School Library Programs* appeared in 1960. Last year the AASL presi-

*Richard Darling is director of instructional materials, Montgomery County Public Schools, Rockville, Maryland. This article is the keynote speech he delivered to the N. C. Association of School Librarians work conference in Greensboro September 29, 1966.

1. J. Lloyd Trump. "Changing Concepts of Instruction and the School Library as a Materials Center." *The School Library as a Materials Center*. Washington: U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, 1963. p. 6.

2. J. Lloyd Trump. "Independent Study Centers: Their Relation to the Central Library," *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals*, L (January, 1966) p. 51.

dent appointed a committee to revise the 1960 standards. Dr. Frances Henne, chairman of the 1960 National Standards Committee and of the new committee, made the following significant comment in a recent article.

"It is perhaps indicative of the tenor of the times that requests from the field for up-dating of the standards are coming within a period of time that is approximately one-third of that which elapsed between the first version of the national standards and the 1960 revision."³

The requests for revision of the standards, to which Dr. Henne refers, are coming, not because all, or even a majority, of school libraries have achieved or surpassed the 1960 standards, but because school libraries have changed and are changing so rapidly in unforeseen ways that some elements of the standards are no longer relevant. In other important elements of today's school library service, the standards provide no guidance at all, or very little.

How have school libraries changed? What are the elements, newly initiated or expanded, that make it possible to talk about a new look? Do school library programs actually exhibit new characteristics and demonstrate altered relationships with the instructional programs of the schools? The answer is an emphatic yes. School libraries have changed and continue to do so. They have collections of a different size, scope, and variety. They offer services of a different nature, and they are administered by school librarians who have had the imagination to create flexible organizational structures to accommodate the needs of students and teachers for materials and services.

Change In Education

Changes in education itself have influenced school library service. With radical shifts in the nature of our society, educators have revised and improved curricula to meet the needs of our times. Since World War II new and improved methods of transportation and communication have reduced the cultural gap between the nations. Both television images and conversation between individuals are transmitted between continents by *satellite*. Soon men will be traveling by supersonic jet planes, and already our astronauts have flown far beyond earth's atmosphere preparatory to a manned moon flight. Modern medicine and improved agriculture have contributed to a population explosion and to a great migration from the countryside to the great urban centers. The schools have responded to this brave new world by adding new courses to the curricula, by altering and revitalizing old courses, and by creating new ways of teaching that are appropriate to the educational times.

Not least among the factors affecting the schools have been the vast increase in knowledge and the technology which has accompanied it. It has been repeated to the point of triteness that 90% of the scientists who ever lived are alive and active today. But even that fact does not begin to indicate the increase in knowledge. In 1965 nearly twice as many books were published in the United States as in 1960 — 20,234 new titles and 8,361 new editions of older books. To that flood must be added 20,373 titles from the periodical presses and about 80,000 technical reports.

Technology has also influenced the schools. Developments in technology related

3. Frances Henne, "The Challenge of Change: New Standards for New Times," *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals*, L (January, 1966) p. 75.

to communications, in particular, have made possible new ways of teaching and of learning. Closed circuit television has made it possible to bring master teachers into every classroom. The videodisc, still barely more than a rumor, gives promise that television, today the least flexible of media, may soon be better adapted to curricular needs. Teaching machines, 8mm cartridge-mounted film loops, and other new media have proven useful to the teacher and learner. The same kinds of developments which have altered society have also altered the schools.

Change In The School Library

The school library has been at the heart of change in the school. As society has become more complex, we have recognized the need for multiple approaches to understanding it. Educators, first recognizing that the textbook with its single point of view was inadequate, soon began to suspect that even the resources of the traditional school library could not supply adequate support for good instruction.

Librarians were in the vanguard of those who began to plan instructional materials services appropriate to today's education, and to broaden the program of the school library to include all materials of teaching and learning.

It was almost a decade ago, at the Miami Beach conference in 1956, that the AASL adopted its policy statement that the school library should be administered as an instructional materials center. In 1966 many school libraries have fully implemented that philosophy, providing all instructional material required to support the curriculum, equipment needed for their use, and related services. Others have moved beyond, functioning as a nerve center with impulses reaching into every part of the school. In a few cases, the school, in a vital sense, has become a school library. Let us look more closely at some of these developments.

The School Library — A Materials Center

The most striking characteristic of the new school library is the diversity of its collections. Librarians have accepted new media and others not so new into an integrated program in which each medium is accepted for its own integrity and for its value in education. Materials for reading, materials for viewing, and materials for listening are all a part of the library, used for the contribution they can make to study of a topic or to the learning needs of a particular child. A look at the collections found in the new school library reveals the extent of change.

The largest portion of the collection consists of various kinds of printed materials. The book collection, in fact, is larger than in traditional libraries, but it is weighted far more heavily to materials directly related to units of instruction. With the aid of teachers, librarians select advanced materials for rapid learners, easy materials for the slower, special books that will be used only in research, government documents, and pamphlets, all concerned with a single subject, or a closely related group of subjects. The old idea of a balanced collection has no place in a school library whose function is instructional support. Each item justifies its place in the collection by its role in the curriculum.

The book collection has many more special and advanced reference books. It includes advanced indexes and bibliographies so that students and teachers may have more ready access to the contents of the collection.

Periodical collections, particularly in secondary schools, have more titles and, to support individual study and research, long runs of back issues. Many school libraries are providing back volumes by purchasing them on microfilm, thereby eliminating the need for vastly increased storage space.

A few school libraries have gone even further in the use of microfilm, purchasing rare books, early magazines, and newspapers on microfilm in order to provide history students with original source material published in the period they are studying. Some schools and school systems have purchased microfilm cameras so that they could microfilm teacher-prepared materials, rare items of state and local history, and other uncopied materials for student use.

Librarians have also added new and different printed materials. Paperbound books, often less expensive than casebound ones, are used to expand collections quickly and relatively inexpensively when the school introduces new courses, and to provide extensive duplication. Independent study and remedial study in the school library have created a place for programmed books and programmed materials for use in teaching machines.

In addition to a more varied collection of printed materials, the school library includes a variety of auditory and visual materials. A partial list of new media administered by the school library provides a picture of the scope of its program.

1. 16mm motion picture films, which are still used primarily for group instruction, but which may be used equally effectively for individual study in the library; 2. Cartidge-mounted 8mm film loops which are ideal for individual use by students; 3. Filmstrips, which teachers use in the classroom, and students use with individual viewers; 4. Slides and slide sets related to the curriculum; 5. Disc recordings to support instruction in music, literature, and the social studies; 6. Tape recordings and blank tapes for students and teachers to make recordings. Useful in many subjects, tape recordings have proven to be of special value in foreign and English language arts; 7. Transparencies and overlays, and supplies and equipment to create them locally; 8. Maps, charts, and globes, some of which may be permanently placed in classrooms, but all of which are inventoried in the library; 9. In elementary schools, which do not usually have science laboratories, simple science equipment, exhibits of rocks and similar realia.

In order to provide services with these kinds of materials, the library supplies the necessary equipment. The modern school library inventory includes projectors, tape recorders, record players, bioscopes, listening stations, individual and small group previewers, radio and television receivers. The library provides materials, equipment to use them, and knowledge of their use.

Services of the School Library

Patterns of school library use have also changed. The traditional interpretation of the library as one of the teaching stations in the school has rapidly given ground to the idea that the library is a service agency supporting the whole curriculum. One result of this new idea is the abandonment of rigid scheduling of classes to the library. In today's school library program teachers encourage pupils to use the library individually and in small groups whenever the need for materials arises, and bring whole classes to the library only irregularly and for specific purposes.

With students seeking the library for identified study and research needs, the li-

brarians are able to give them the close individual guidance in reading, listening, and viewing that is essential for maximum benefit from their library activities. The time formerly used for extensive, and often wasted, library lessons for entire classes is devoted to helping students locate materials, or finding materials for them, to assisting them in assessing the value of materials for their assignments, and to teaching them the value, strengths, and limitations of each media.

To meet student needs for a variety of materials, librarians have developed more flexible procedures and extended services. Lengths of loans are geared to student assignments, and to classroom units. It is not uncommon for students to check out materials for use at home or in library study carrels for long periods of time, and for teachers to borrow materials to keep in classrooms or laboratories. Because so many types of materials require equipment for their use, school libraries are open for service in the evening, on Saturdays, and during holiday periods. A few libraries have had successful experiences in circulation of instructional equipment for home use by students.

Perhaps the most significant change in the library program, however, is in the way librarians work with teachers. A far greater amount of their time is spent in assisting teachers in planning units of instruction so that instructional materials may contribute effectively to teaching and so that they can do follow-up work with students in the library. Librarians cooperate in the instructional program also by serving on curriculum committees. In other words, they play an enlarged role in the educational program as a vital member of the instructional team, their services closely related to curriculum.

The School Library Staff

The new look in school libraries demands a new kind of school librarian. He must know curriculum and teaching methods. He must know educational media and their value and use in education. He must have the ability to bring administrative techniques and creative imagination together to develop library services that meet the needs of today's schools.

Library education institutions have begun to provide programs appropriate for modern school librarianship, but many of them have failed to perceive the ways in which school libraries have diverged from other types of libraries. A few schools, in their regular programs, and a number of the NDEA Title XI Institutes for School Library Personnel are doing a good job of preparing librarians to administer school libraries as comprehensive instructional materials centers. We need more radical changes in pre-service education of school librarians, and more daring short courses and workshops to update the education of librarians already in service. Library education for school librarians should exhibit more methods of using materials in instruction that are commonplace in elementary and secondary education.

The evolving new school librarian is only one element in the new look in school library staffing. Schools have more librarians, and more clerks and technicians to support them. Though few schools have achieved the standard of one librarian to 300 pupils, many of them have increased the size of their professional staff and have enabled them to function in a more professional role.

Library aides perform many important tasks in the new school library. Under the supervision of librarians, they prepare materials for use, assembling collections identified

by teachers and librarians, prepare slides and transparencies, handle the instructional equipment, and do many clerical jobs related to ordering, circulation, and use of library materials.

Many school systems have also initiated centralized ordering, cataloging, and processing services to relieve local school staffs of routine duties related to procurement and preparation of materials.

Experimental Programs

Vital as the program we have been describing is, several experimental and pilot projects are currently underway which hold promise of accelerating the rate of change in school library service. Everyone in education has heard of the exciting demonstrations of school library service under the Knapp School Libraries Project. But did you know that the Oak Park and River Forest High School in Illinois has received a Title III grant under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, to develop its library instructional materials program through the use of modern technology? A number of school systems have developed model school libraries in deprived areas using allocations from Title I. Both Maryland and Washington state report such programs. Under Title II, the school library title, demonstration school library programs have been funded in Kansas, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, and other states.

Not all the exciting new ventures in school library services result from federal largess. The Toronto Public Schools have conducted an interesting experiment in providing materials to students and teachers from a central source. The Toronto program raises several questions to be sure, such as the delicate issue of copyright and the basic educational issue of pre-selecting all materials for student assignment. But it faces one problem, the student's lack of time to search for everything he needs. Though few, if any, schools may want to adopt Toronto's method, they will find ideas in it worth adapting to sounder services.

The Montgemry County (Md.) Public School system has on the drawing boards an elementary school with a library sure to arouse interest. Calverton Elementary School will have a communications center as part of the library, equipped with a 120-cartridge tape deck. By dialing from a study carrel in the library or from a classroom, the student can activate any one of the 120 tape recordings in the console and listen to it either by earphones or through a speaker system. The school will have a conduit so that visual materials may be similarly transmitted at a later date.

Another project with implications for school libraries is the City of Columbia, Md. Columbia, a wholly-planned new town of 115,000 people, will rise from what are now rolling farmlands midway between Baltimore and Washington. The Council on Library Resources financed a study of library service appropriate for a new city. The report, *A Library Program for Columbia*, presents a plan for library service which coordinates different types of libraries and makes maximum use of new technology — television, both closed circuit and community antenna, and computer services.

A few school systems have begun to use computers in library central services. Port Huron, Michigan, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, prepare catalog cards through the use of data processing. The Library of Congress has included one school system in its

MARC project, a pilot program to determine the feasibility of selling catalog information on computer tapes instead of on printed cards. This project opens the possibility not only of cataloging by computer, but of machine-generated bibliographical services for schools.

These are only a handful of the projects opening new doors for school libraries. What their significance may be, finally, for the individual school, it is too early to say, but that they have a significance is evident. As school librarians struggle to make materials and information available to pupils and teachers at all levels wherever and whenever they are needed, they should use all the mechanical help and all the new ideas available, for the new look in school libraries is vital and exciting support for instruction. The new look for school librarians is an educational role in which the highest premium is placed on their professional ability.

"As good almost kill a man as kill a good book."

—John Milton
Areopagitica
1644

"It is with books as with men; a very small number play a great part."

—Voltaire
Philosophical Dictionary
1764

"A book is somehow sacred. A dictator can kill and maim people, can sink to any kind of tyranny and only be hated, but when books are burned the ultimate in tyranny has happened."

—John Steinbeck

IN MEMORIAM

The entire membership of the North Carolina Library Association has been saddened by the death of Joseph Ruzicka, Sr., who passed away November 30, 1966 at the age of 91.

A long-time friend of libraries and librarians, Mr. Ruzicka was associated with library binding during his entire adult life. His name was, and is, synonymous with high quality binding of books and periodicals.