

The Use Of Student Assistants At Wingate College Library

BY ETHEL K. SMITH

Through the years one of the most outstanding features of Wingate College Library has been its fine student librarian program. It has been based on two major factors: The student assistants have been carefully chosen, and they have known and accepted their responsibilities and job assignments so that they can work with minimum supervision.



On the Job: Jimmy Allred—lettering; Betty Maddry—filing; Ruth Williams—Typing catalog cards.

the library keep this under control is a tribute to their ability and to the respect in which they are held by their fellow students.

The success of the student assistant program begins with the selection of the student assistants. Many students are recommended to the library by former assistant, by high school librarians, by high school counselors, and by Mr. John A. Cox, Wingate's Director of Admissions. From those who apply for a work scholarship, sixteen students with good native ability, good high school records, especially in English, and an interest in library work are assigned to the library. Only freshman students interested in working two years are accepted for the library.

Obviously the cooperation of the administration is necessary for a satisfactory student assistant program. This cooperation is provided in at least four areas: First, the pay for student assistants is enough to make it worth a student's time to work; second, only good students who can work and keep up with their studies are assigned to the library; third, the dean's office is most cooperative in the class scheduling of all work students at Wingate; and last and most important, the library is protected against raiding by other departments who want the library assistants their sophomore year by a school wide policy of increased pay for the second year's work in the same job.

Mrs. Smith is Librarian, Wingate College, Wingate.

Wingate College Library serves a student body of more than thirteen hundred. Three professional librarians and sixteen student assistants offer full adequate library service to these students. Approximately three thousand volumes are processed each year. All clerical work is done by the student assistants. Since Wingate College is a junior college, the number of students taking a given subject such as freshman English is larger than it would be in a senior college with the same enrollment. Therefore the use of reserve books is quite heavy. Also the fact that the girls must be in their rooms four nights a week for closed study hour except for going to the library could create a discipline problem for the library. The fine manner in which the student assistants who are responsible for discipline in

After the students have been assigned to the library by the scholarship committee, the responsibility for training them rests with the librarians. A very careful study of the complete folder in the registrar's office is made by the head librarian before job assignments are made. Each student is trained for both the main circulation desk and the upstairs reserve desk. In addition, he is assigned one major job. Usually a sophomore and a freshman are assigned the same job, and the sophomore teaches the freshman much that he needs to know. For example, students do all the filing above the rod. Usually the freshman with the highest potential is assigned to filing, for it necessitates a learning of filing rules and an exercise of judgment. Immediately after the opening of school, that student is given library time to read Akers' *Library Cataloging* and *A. L. A. Rules for Filing Catalog Cards*. Then she works with the sophomore filer, doing simple alphabetizing. Only during the second semester will the freshman actually file in the catalog. The same method is used to teach the typists who work on the catalog cards.

This kind of student assistant program requires of the librarian much time and patience. The jobs that the students do are clerical and even semi-professional in nature, with many questions to be answered and many "whys" to be explained. There will be questions, questions, and questions until the jobs are learned. But once the student understands the process and its relevance to the rest of the library process, the librarians are freed from routine tasks to devote their time to professional duties. The librarian has to be willing to teach.

It is possible for a book to be chosen, received, accessioned, L. C.'s ordered or cataloged locally, prepared physically, listed on the new book list, cards filed, shelved in the faculty reading room for a period, and placed in the regular collection without any conversation relative to it. Our thanks go to Dr. Susan G. Akers, who taught the head librarian to organize library work so that the work would be done by location (when a book is on a given shelf a given process is indicated) and so that every five minutes can be used for productive work.

Perhaps the tracing of a book through processing might best illustrate the methods used in Wingate College Library. When a new edition of *Essay and General Literature Index* arrives, it is received and the bill verified by Miss Susan Crane, assistant librarian who receives everything for which there is a bill. It is then accessioned by Lynn Jones who divides all accessioned books into divisions according to the cards or slips in the book.

This index is then given to Nina Helms or Brenda Hardin, each of whom works at Desk #1 during slack periods such as the noon hour. They look up each book in the section labeled "List of Books Indexed" and write by that book the call number for each book which the library now owns. Then *Essay and General Literature Index* is returned to Mrs. Smith's desk. In studying all items not owned by the library, she uses her accumulated knowledge of the library requirements of each course offered at Wingate, of the present holdings of the library, and of authors, editors, and presses, and checks all additional books in the bibliography which look promising for Wingate College and places the book in the box for the student order assistant.

This assistant, Doreatha Cooley, then writes out the order cards for all books checked and crosses the check mark to show that the order card has been made. With the help

of other assistants, she carries the order cards through the card catalog, the "Received" and "Books on Order" cards to be sure that it is not a duplicate. She must initial the back of the cards so that if any error is made, she will be requested to trace it back to see why the error was made. This is a very important factor in using student assistants.

From this point the process will be the same for all books whether selected by the faculty or by the librarians. However, information missing on the faculty request cards must be supplied through *Books in Print* or *C. B. I.*

When a goodly number of order cards have accumulated in the "To Be Ordered" drawer, they are brought to the head librarian who approves those to be ordered. After separating them into direct orders, 35 per cent discount books, and regular books, the order assistant types each order in accord with a standard form.

Before the orders are mailed, Cynthia Mangum rechecks them through the catalog by title so that the possibility of ordering a duplicate is eliminated. This is especially important in the case of edited books or series.

The order cards are then placed at the *C. B. I.* table where Wanda Baker looks up all L. C. numbers and orders the L. C. cards. She has made so few mistakes that no adult rechecking is necessary. If a book has been published since 1947, the L. C.'s are ordered immediately.



Teaching new assistants library tools, l. to r.: Brenda Hardin, Carol Fair, Mrs. Smith, Wanda Baker.

Above the *C. B. I.* are books for which the L. C.'s were not available at the time of ordering the book. Miss Baker checks them automatically. When she finds the L. C. number, she orders cards, writes in the front of the book the L. C. number and the date ordered and shelves the book in a separate section to await the cards. Books for which L. C. cards are definitely not available go on a special shelf for Miss Crane, who catalogs locally all such books in English, or on another shelf for Mrs. Smith, who catalogs all foreign language books.

When the books are cataloged, they are placed on a book truck by the cataloging typewriter. Four girls, Betty Pressley, a sophomore and head typist, Sarah Paschal, Ruth Williams, and Carol Fair type all catalog cards. Careful and painstaking effort has gone into training them.

All books for which cards have been typed are placed on another book truck. Brenda Hardin verifies all call numbers on the catalog cards, on the cards and pockets, and in the book itself, as well as all accession numbers. She removes the book jacket and prepares it for filing.

Jimmy Allred, a pre-engineering student, does a beautiful job of lettering. After the books are shellacked, they are placed in the faculty reading room. Mrs. Louise Blackwelder, reserve and records librarian, is responsible for shelving all books out of the faculty reading room.

The reader will notice that the work is so arranged that each adult librarian has an opportunity to handle all new books at one point or another so that she adds to her knowledge of new books.

When a drawer of completed catalog cards accumulates, the head librarian proofreads them by sets. Since the yellow L. C. slip or "P" slip has been left with the cards and has been initialed by the typist, the cards needing correction are given back to the original typist. She is expected to find the error and retype the card. This is a part of the teaching process. Maxine Gaddy, now a student in library science at Appalachian, typed catalog cards for two years and two summers until she could do whole drawers without having a single card sent back for corrections.

The catalog cards then go to Jean Metelli, who sorts and alphabetizes them preparatory to filing in the card catalog. Later Betty Maddrey, a sophomore, files them above the rod. Of course, a professional librarian proofreads the filing before the cards are dropped.

Suppose some of these books are to be placed on reserve. Don Helms and Geary Kent on the reserve desk get these books from the special shelves where the faculty place either books or lists of books to be placed on reserve. They also keep a constant inventory of the reserve books. A simple but very helpful addition has been made for reserve books. A short blue book card (long blue cards are placed in the book on reserve) is made for every book placed on reserve. These are filed by course at desk #2 and are available for student patrons to see what books are currently on reserve, as well as for inventorying reserve books. As a book is taken off reserve, all blue cards go into an inactive file ready to be used whenever the book is again placed on reserve. The regular white book cards for all books on reserve are filed by shelf-list at desk #1. Reserves are especially important in a junior college with a large enrollment and a limited collection.

Students also carry much responsibility for other important jobs in the library. The student who keeps the library statistics is scheduled in the library for first period every

day. Jerry Strum who checks in all periodicals and keeps the periodical files in order is likewise scheduled for an early morning period daily.

During 1964-65, an effort is being made to get all music and poetry recordings properly cataloged. While the cataloging is done by one of the professional librarians, Carol Fair is rapidly typing the catalog cards.

Overdue books give little problem, for an assistant writes overdue notices only once a week with the notices being sent through the campus mail for boarding students and through the regular mail for day students with the price of the stamps being added to the fine.

The student assistants are expected to work efficiently in a business-like manner. They may never study on library time, but they may be absent without advance notice if they have a test or are behind in their school work. Their class schedules and their heavy courses are considered in making their library schedule. If they want to miss any night or weekend work, they must exchange hours with another assistant. The tradition at Wingate College is politeness on both sides of the desk.

Many factors would indicate that the student assistant program at Wingate College Library is at least satisfactory and perhaps even very successful.

First, the student body enjoys the library. On many days the total student attendance in the library is more than the total enrollment. Even with so large an attendance, the student assistants control the discipline very well.

Second, three adult librarians are able to give satisfactory service to a student body of thirteen hundred.

Third, the books are processed immediately. There is no backlog of work. The student assistants relieve the professional librarians for professional work.

Fourth, the student assistants learn from their library experience. It has often been said that their work in the library is worth at least two courses: one for their increased knowledge of books and one for their experience in dealing with people and in accepting responsibility. Every student who has worked two years in Wingate College Library has been able to get a job either in the summer or at a senior college if he wanted it to help with his senior college expenses.

Fifth, two assistants who graduated last year are now studying to become professional librarians. One this year plans to be a librarian. The secretarial student assistants have been hired for good jobs, partly on the basis of their experience here.

Sixth, members of the same family often work in the library. Three of this year's assistants had older brothers or sisters who were also assistants. Two others are from the Oxford Orphanage and had been recommended by a former assistant from there.

Seventh, the grades and the honors received by the library assistants have been outstanding. This year Betty Maddrey is secretary of the student body and Jimmy Allred is B. S. U. president. Several are members of the honor societies, and many are in the choir and on various councils.

Last year the visiting committee from the Southern Association commented in their report:

"The student assistants are chosen with great care, then thoroughly trained to do many intricate operations not usually associated with student help. This program has been unusually successful. There is a remarkable *esprit de corps* that carries over from the professional staff to the student assistants."