

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE TO SCHOOLS

How much service should the public library give to schools? The North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction invited a group of public librarians, the State Librarian and members of her staff to meet with school superintendents, principals, supervisors, librarians and members of his staff on January 9, 1957, to discuss answers to this question. Although no definitive, single answer was found, the discussion was lively and paths to the answer were revealed.

Participants were asked to consider six topics:

What are the primary objectives of the school library?

What are the primary objectives of the public library?

What are the responsibilities of the school for establishing and maintaining the school library?

What services can public libraries render to schools?

What are procedures for rendering these services?

How can the school encourage the student to use his public library?

After brief discussions of the objectives of school and public libraries the group obtained a sampling of services now given by public libraries to schools. Although practice varies widely, the following services are given by at least one public library represented at the conference:

1. Lending materials to schools. Types of material loaned include the regular book collection, professional references, and audio-visual materials. Methods of loan include individual and class visits to the public library; reserve collections in the public library; loan collections of books to central school library or to classrooms; and bookmobile service to individual pupils or to teacher-pupil committees.
2. Consultant service in technical processes and organization.
3. Cooperation in book selection (sharing reviews and expensive bibliographic tools).
4. Sharing information concerning available book resources (through bibliographies and book exhibits).

All through the day long meeting it was evident that common problems exist which may be at least partially solved cooperatively. The following recommendations were agreed upon by all.

1. There is need for cooperative planning by both school and public library representatives at all levels. Advance planning for borrowing-lending procedures was considered most important. A manual of such procedures for teacher use, and conferences with teachers at the beginning of each school year have been found helpful. Systems for making advance requests were recommended.
2. Public library service to a school should decrease as the school library becomes more adequate. The public library service to schools should supplement school library service. The book resources of North Carolina public schools (5 million volumes) are greater than the resources of public libraries (2 million volumes).

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3. Knowledge of available library resources is needed—awareness by the public librarian of school library resources and awareness by school personnel of public library resources. Techniques for cooperation in selecting, displaying, and publicizing materials were discussed.
4. Public library services to schools should be given through the central school library where there is a "concerned, responsible" person in charge and adequate physical facilities exist. Such loans should be carefully selected by teachers, librarian, and principal working together with the public library staff to select titles which supplement the school's resources.

A final suggestion was made that it would be helpful to work out a questionnaire which public libraries could send to schools in their service area, and which would ask schools to specify the types of service they need from the public library.

The widespread interest in school and public library relationships was indicated by the fact that all persons invited to participate in the Conference were present. It was the consensus of the participants that the conference was beneficial to all concerned and that further meetings of this nature should be held on every level—local, county, regional, and state—for further consideration of mutual objectives, problems, and practices.
