

QUALITY OF PERSONNEL NEEDED FOR LIBRARY WORK

This generation has seen a transformation in the purposes of library service which has brought all libraries into closer relationship with the prevalent social and economic conditions. The library has become a community service center; libraries for research in special subjects have developed as departments within libraries, as separate libraries, or as libraries within other organizations; schools have strengthened their elementary and high school libraries for providing the service needed with today's teaching methods; and college and university libraries have extended their resources to reach toward the ever-increasing demands in research.

These changing patterns are bringing urgent requests for personnel trained to do the specific tasks required in the various professional positions which fall within the general classification of *librarian*. The list of positions is long; the kinds of positions vary widely; libraries which are in tune with the times are revising the position requirements often. Today's library is a dynamic part of the area it serves.

I. QUALIFICATIONS

That the one word, "librarian", can apply to so many positions indicates that certain general educational, professional and personal qualifications prevail before specialties appear. Every librarian works with recorded information, whether it is printed, filmed or otherwise made available for man's use. No matter what his position may be every librarian is concerned with the ultimate use of the materials. It is necessary that he be able to place in proper perspective all of the processes of selection, organization and promotion which serve to bring the materials to the users.

As in other professions, librarians need to express professional responsibility through respect for the profession and for its members and through interest in continued personal and professional growth.

If it is possible to separate certain personal qualities from all those which are desirable, intellectual curiosity, alertness, enthusiasm, empathy and dependability can be labelled as indispensable to librarians. The library's business of bringing books and people together cannot be accomplished by librarians who are indifferent to knowledge, unresponsive to people, and unaware of the world about them. People of all ages respond to friendly, happy, enthusiastic librarians who display a genuine interest in guiding them to reading which will provide the information or refreshment they seek.

Employers will look for the qualities mentioned above and will also expect the applicant to have specific experience or training for the particular position under consideration. Necessary educational background and experience vary for such positions as the head cataloger in a university library who indirectly serves the users; the county librarian who undertakes all professional duties and takes part in a wide variety of community activities; the elementary school librarian; the administrator of a large public library with thirty branch libraries; the librarian of a small college library; or the librarian of a chemical firm's special library. Hundreds of examples might be given which illustrate the necessity for the employer to weigh general and specific qualifications for the position.

II. EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The education of the librarian combines academic study with professional training. Every librarian needs to have wide knowledge of the world of books. Any specialization requires more than average subject knowledge. The variety in library service

provides many opportunities in subject specialization, but these do not eliminate the need for a strong foundation in the liberal arts. Since the librarian is concerned with knowledge and learning, his scholarship needs to be more than average.

But academic competence alone does not guarantee professional library service. Professional education is also essential. The basic comprehensive program of professional preparation is one year of study beyond college leading to a master's degree. Schools with graduate library programs are subject to accreditation by the American Library Association. Degrees from these accredited schools are recognized throughout the world. Courses are offered in these programs which prepare for university, public, school or special library service and also provide for some specialization within these fields.

Other professional training programs are offered (1) within the four-year undergraduate curriculum and (2) in a prescribed sequence of courses required for certification for some positions in school and public libraries. The first of these programs is accredited by the several national, regional and state accrediting agencies such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Even so, graduates from institutions offering these curricula find that some library positions are not open to them unless they supplement this training with additional study.

The second program, for certification, is ordinarily incorporated in or added to the usual requirements for an undergraduate degree, particularly in schools which specialize in teacher education. Librarians thus trained are eligible only for those types of positions for which they are certified.