Feasibility study of central processing centers for Iowa schools

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University of Northern Iowa

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Abstract
This study is designed to show comparative information of several central processing centers in Iowa and to compare the costs of these centers with other processing methods and to present related problems concerning each method.
FEASIBILITY STUDY OF CENTRAL PROCESSING CENTERS FOR IOWA SCHOOLS

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A Research Paper
Presented to
Mr. Clyde Greve, Department of Library Science
University of Northern Iowa

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In Fulfillment
of the Requirements for
Research 35:299

by
Judith Dohse Casey
May 1971
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Clyde Greve
CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

School systems throughout Iowa, as throughout the nation, are realizing the role of the media center in the individual school. Secondary school media centers are now beginning to emerge and take their place within the total school curriculum. Independent study and dynamic curriculum changes are dictating a more meaningful place for the media center in the school picture.

In the elementary school, the use of ungraded instruction makes the classroom library collection obsolete. Media centers are, therefore, occupying an important place in the elementary school, also.

Because of need for rapid expansion and growth of media programs in all levels of education, school systems are budgeting more funds than ever before for all types of educational materials. These materials must be organized and be made ready for circulation as quickly as possible. Librarians have long dreaded the backlog of printed materials that had to be processed during every school year. Now this job has become even more momentous with the increased volume and the variety in the types of materials being used in the schools.

Unfortunately most schools in Iowa are understaffed in their media centers. Very few, if any at all, fulfill the
recommended Standards for School Media Programs as published by the American Library Association concerning the professional and nonprofessional staff in the media center. Far too many schools, especially elementary schools, have a professional librarian only a fraction of the day. Secondary schools involved in independent study programs use the resources of the media center a greater portion of the school day with the assistance of the librarian. The librarian also becomes more involved in bibliographic writing than ever before.

These activities do not allow for librarians to spend the needed time to catalog and process materials. Several solutions are available to the school system. They are: (1) to hire additional staff in each center and retain the processing in that center, (2) to centralize all processing for all the media centers of the system, or (3) to have materials processed commercially.

The Problem

Statement of the Problem

This study is designed to show comparative information of several central processing centers in Iowa and to compare the costs of these centers with other processing methods and to present related problems concerning each method.

Importance of the Study

Many school systems hesitate to attempt to find a solution to librarians' processing problems because information comparing the various solutions is scarce and it is far easier to retain the status quo in school libraries.
The question of how large a school system must be to justify central processing has not been explored for our situation in Iowa. A central processing center is an expenditure that certainly must be justified. Much qualitative information has been given, but very little quantitative information has been provided. The purpose of this study is to provide some quantitative data, applicable to Iowa schools.

Definitions of Terms Used

**Media Center**

The media center is an area in an individual school used to house and circulate print and non-print materials to support the school curriculum and recreational interests of the students and teachers. This could also be called the library.

**Central Processing Center**

A system-wide center for the purpose of ordering, cataloging, and processing the materials for the school media centers is the central processing center.

**Commercial Processing**

Processing done by a commercial firm as part of the book or materials charge is commercial processing.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

It is advisable to have materials cataloged and processed through some agency outside the school building. This insures skilled service, avoids duplication of effort, and provides maximum time for the professional staff of the school media center to work directly with students and teachers. Moreover, it makes materials immediately accessible upon their delivery to the school media center.

Arrangements for centralized processing are practical and recommended for any school system or cluster of cooperating schools. For many schools centralized processing at the system level provides the most efficient and economical service.¹

The 1969 Standards for School Media Programs by the American Library Association went on to state that commercial cataloging can also provide a variety of services to schools not having access to system processing. And, that cataloging by the producer or publisher of the material according to certain universal standards is yet another possibility to economically eliminate the burden of technical services from the individual school librarian.

To many school librarians, especially in Iowa and particularly to those who are struggling to establish even a minimum collection of books, the idea of centralized processing is very remote. Even in our larger Iowa cities the concept and establishment of such centers is a relatively

recent development. However, Melvil Dewey, in 1876, published an article in the *Library Journal* about cooperative cataloging and before that, Charles Coffin Jewett, superintendent of the Boston Public Library, suggested that "libraries in the United States organize with the Smithsonian as its center to engage in definite cooperative enterprise including cataloging."  

The Los Angeles City Schools began centralized cataloging in 1927. Their only complaint is that they can no longer keep up with the volume of work and have partially shifted to commercial cataloging.

Vincent J. Aceto, in a study of centralized processing centers in twenty-four New York State school systems, reported that some had been in existence for at least 20 years—1944 or earlier. Seventy-five percent of the centers had been started after 1954 with ten of the 20 reporting systems starting after 1959.  

The Baltimore Public Schools began central processing in September of 1956. This system was one of the first to prepare a careful self-analysis and cost study for a

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five year period, 1956-1961.

With the publication of the 1960 A.L.A. Standards for School Libraries, which suggested in a footnote that in school systems with three or more schools, centralized processing should be introduced, many systems may have been encouraged to initiate central processing. Six states recommend centralized processing in their standards. Of those, Minnesota recommends centralizing the technical services when a system has two or more schools serving the same grade level. Florida recommends centralized processing at the county or regional level. Hawaii has central processing for the entire state, although it was dismissed as unfeasible in the Roman Catholic school system in Honolulu.

Throughout the country, the Far West indicated the largest number of school systems with centralized processing. The next largest number appeared in the Great Lakes region. This data was compiled by the U. S. Office of Education as a part of the school library statistics for 1960-1961.

There are obvious advantages to having materials processed away from the individual school library. Most of these lie in the area of qualitative services. In

7 Harpham, op. cit., p. 30.
order to justify such centers to those persons other than librarians, the advantages must prove to be economical as well as producing quality library service. At this time, school systems in Iowa are questioning all expenditures and are not quick to initiate further costs. Richard Darling, past-president of the American Association of School Librarians, stated,

Since many school systems, however, have been willing to use professional librarians for this work (technical services) no matter what the cost in service for children and teachers, it may be difficult for a while to persuade the authorities in such systems that adding staff for central processing is economical.9

Librarians must remember that the more school funds expended on technical services, the less money there is available for new materials and related in-school library services. All issues must be considered.

Rationale Involving Central Processing Centers

Qualitative Advantages

In listing the many reasons for introducing central processing centers in school systems, whether at the local, regional, or state level, it is appropriate to investigate the role of the school librarian. Viola James, former director of the library and audio-visual services for the Des Moines Independent Community School District, summarized from the 1960 Standards,

School libraries and school library materials

centers are being evaluated in terms of services they offer to the many changing philosophies and methods of education. If the objective of the school library is to contribute to achieving the objectives formulated by the school, the objectives are more nearly attained when the major function of the library is to provide high quality work with teachers and students.\(^\text{10}\)

Administrators want librarians to work more closely with teachers and students. Unfortunately, the image projected to many superintendents and principals by librarians is one of a highly paid clerk. Librarians must be a part of the teaching and learning function in a school before professional status is totally achieved. "For many schools, central processing for the system provides efficient and economical service and forces librarians to assume leadership."\(^\text{11}\)

Therefore, the major argument favoring central processing is to free the librarian from technical library services and to provide more time to work directly with students and staff in activities such as reading guidance, reference work, library instruction, and bibliographic preparation. The librarian is also freed to read and study professional literature, read materials in the library, do more in-depth organization of vertical file and non-indexed periodical material.

Materials processed in a well-organized central processing unit can be made available more quickly than

\(^{10}\) Viola James, "Patterns for Administering the Processing of Resources for the School Library Materials Center," The School Library Materials Center, ed. Alice Lohrer (Urbana, Ill.: University of Ill., 1964), p. 33.

materials processed in each school library where priorities might dictate leaving the cataloging until last.

Uniformity in cataloging among the various schools in a district is definitely an advantage that leads to quality school libraries. This is especially true if the processing librarian has served at the elementary as well as the secondary level in school libraries and is familiar with the needs of all these libraries.

Also, uniformity in technical services can be provided for a longer period of time because policies are determined once instead of being changed with every new staff member or individual school librarian.

In systems where the school libraries are served by clerical or paraprofessional personnel, a central processing center would be the only means of processing materials in a professional manner. This situation is more predominant in elementary schools. However, even in schools where there is a full-time professional librarian, there may be a great understaffing of clerical workers to handle a large volume of materials in processing. Elementary schools do seem to profit more from central processing than do secondary schools because of the problem of untrained or inadequate staff.

In central processing centers, quality cataloging can be achieved because the professional in charge is a specialist in this area of library work. "In most school libraries the librarians must fill all the professional library positions, an assignment that forces the librarian to perform all tasks, whether or not they fit his skills and
personality."\textsuperscript{12}

At least one librarian, according to Aceto, saw a quality in central processing as a means of controlling the selection of materials by other librarians stating that it offered the supervisor an opportunity to eliminate inappropriate materials before they were ordered. Another equally disturbing advantage given by a librarian is that it avoids difficulties with teachers taking new books before they have been processed.\textsuperscript{13}

Disregarding the last two "advantages" given, central processing can lead directly to quality school libraries. Continuing a statement by Richard Darling, "But with growing recognition of the professional work of the librarian, it will be easier to persuade school officials that it is more economical to pay professional salaries for professional work, while lower-paid employees, or machines do the routines."

**Quantitative Advantages**

Central processing does offer some very explicit advantages leading to quality library service. However, to produce an area which is economically feasible, quantity of service also enters into the overall picture. What are some of the economical advantages of having materials processed in one central location?

School systems are discovering, as industry has long known, that quantity lowers costs. The more materials that

\textsuperscript{13} Aceto, loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{14} Darling, "Is Central Processing for You?" loc. cit.
are processed, the lower the cost per item invested in 
technical services. By centralizing all technical procedures,
the cost to the school district becomes far more economical 
than by having each individual library provide this work.
The reasons for this are that (1) expensive cataloging tools
need only to be purchased once for the center; (2) equipment
used in processing materials do not have to be in each
school, only in the center; (3) larger discounts might be
obtained from book jobbers by purchasing larger orders;
(4) discounts are larger on processing supplies when buying in
quantity; (5) some materials could be utilized effectively
throughout the school system instead of being purchased
by each individual school.\footnote{James, op. cit., p. 35.}

Further, central processing eliminates the duplication
of cataloging work done by each school librarian. Even
though the librarians select their own materials to accommodate
a particular school, there is a common curriculum for the
entire school system. Librarians selecting from many of the
same approved sources will arrive at a large number of duplicate
titles.\footnote{Darling, "School Library Processing Centers,"
op. cit., p. 60.}

So the professional staff and the clerks can work with
a larger number of materials more efficiently than a larger
number of professionals and clerks can in the individual
schools. Duplication of effort is very expensive.
It is also an expense to provide work area large enough to accommodate processing in every school as opposed to one area which will be utilized continually for processing.

Another very important function of a central processing unit in a growing school system is the ability to prepare complete collections for new schools or libraries. Here, in Iowa, elementary libraries are gaining in significance and many systems are opening new libraries in their elementary schools. Larger systems open several every year. This can best be achieved through the central processing center.\footnote{Darling, "Is Central Processing for You?" op. cit., p. 6156.}

Disadvantages of Central Processing

There can be disadvantages to any school unit if it is not organized efficiently to meet the needs of the persons it is serving. Central processing units are not immune to criticism. For the most part, librarians welcomed the center, but problem areas had to be changed or eliminated in almost all systems for which there is literature available.

In New York State, predetermined dates for orders were used in some centers. This limits the flexibility of the school librarian in purchasing materials as needed throughout the year.\footnote{Aceto, op. cit., p. 323.}

Several processing librarians did the selection as well as the processing of materials for the schools they served. This would not be a desirable characteristic to have
in a processing unit. Even the use of required selection lists by the school librarians greatly limits the variety of materials that can be purchased. Some centers will not process non-print material. These are usually long established centers that need some re-evaluation or new personnel.

Four disadvantages cited by Bernice Wiese and Catharine Whitehorn in a five year study of centralized cataloging and processing in the Baltimore Public Schools were that catalogs may have weaknesses when cross references are not included promptly, librarians may not take time to examine new books, some librarians wish to classify books differently, and delay in books reaching the shelves. Also, some school librarians fear a loss of authority if they do not catalog the materials themselves.

All of these disadvantages are organizational or professional in nature. Centers that do not require due dates for orders have succeeded as economically as those who do have specific ordering dates. There is nothing that proves selection by a central librarian is more economical than selection by individual school librarians or that approved selection lists are any more economical than a good book jobber, although the ordering may be easier on the center librarian.

The problem of cross referencing was solved in Montgomery County, Maryland, when they began to print and

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distribute subject cross reference cards to the libraries and therefore knew what each library had in its card catalog. The delay in books reaching the shelves did not seem to be a valid claim in the Baltimore schools according to their past experience. The other disadvantages appear to be specific problems of specific librarians.

Since librarians basically control the organization of the central processing center, it would appear that they are their own worst enemy in many instances.

None of these disadvantages are major obstacles to a successful central processing center.

**Commercial Cataloging**

Another method of relieving the school librarian from the tasks of cataloging is to purchase this service from a commercial outlet that may supply the subscriber with a set of printed catalog cards to complete processing services.

The costs vary from 20¢ for a set of H.W. Wilson printed cards to several dollars depending on the company and the specific title. Most of the cheaper commercial cataloging comes from book jobbers who offer processing as an incentive to purchase all books from them. The titles which are available through these companies are somewhat limited to basic book lists. The established library might have difficulty getting the newer or more unusual books that would be desired.

Audio-visual materials are also available with commercial cataloging. There are not as many companies
dealing in this area, however. Some explanations to this shortage might be that the materials are not of a homogeneous nature such as books and there is not a standard coding system for the various types of materials throughout the country.

Commercial cataloging can provide some of the advantages of quality that are found in central processing centers and for the small school district, it would be far more economical than central processing. It does, however, increase the cost per piece of material and the individual librarian must weigh this cost against the library budget. If the commercial cataloging is covered by a different school fund, as it should be, and the librarian's net budget for materials is unaffected, commercial cataloging should be most certainly used.

In a feasibility study of central processing for the Catholic schools of Honolulu, Priscilla Harpham recommended commercial cataloging because many of the libraries were not staffed adequately, but a declining Catholic school population discouraged new endeavors such as a central processing center.

Within the central processing center, one form of commercial cataloging should be used—commercially printed cards. A report from the Professional Committee, Northern Section, School Library Association of California, determined that the average professional time spent on a book with printed cards was three (3) minutes, a book without printed

\[20\] Harpham, op. cit., p. 30.
cards was eleven (11) minutes; clerical time spent on books with printed cards was four (4) minutes as opposed to eight (8) minutes on books without cards. Using 10¢ per minute as a professional salary cost and 3¢ per minute for clerical wage, a savings of 72¢ per book can be calculated for books with printed cards as opposed to books without cards.
(See Appendix A) 21

With the time saved using printed cards, a smaller clerical and professional staff in the central processing center can service more schools and handle larger numbers of books.

In Los Angeles the city schools have partially shifted to commercial cataloging and processing because it no longer can keep up with the volume of work. This further shows how commercial cataloging can aid the central processing center. It is not logical, though, that a school system the size of Los Angeles with a functioning central processing center which need not return a profit, cannot catalog as economically and efficiently as a commercial firm. 22

Planning for Central Processing

"Planning" is the key word for efficient and economical central processing centers. Interesting, but very pessimistic,


22 Darling, "School Library Processing Centers," op. cit., p. 64.
comments in the literature reveal that many times planning was done ex post facto. Richard Darling wrote,

Too many school systems, however, have plunged into centralized processing without planning, and have had to suffer through months, or even years, of inefficiency and long delay before they developed by trial and error, the kind of service they needed.

The few school systems which have issued reports on their processing services told little of the planning that preceded their establishment.23

Vincent Aceto was even gloomier when he stated, "It is indeed surprising that school administrators have been willing to establish and maintain central processing centers with only the subjective opinions of librarians as evidence of success. It is even more surprising that librarians have been so quick to adopt this organizational change without first doing their homework."24

Preplanning

The first stage of planning is actually preplanning to determine if central processing is economically feasible. All costs must be taken into consideration. One vital factor in estimating costs is the number of materials to be processed since the unit cost decreases as the volume increases. The more duplication of materials within a system, the more economical central processing becomes, also.

No conclusions can be accurately drawn regarding the minimum load necessary to make a center feasible, although it is probable that smaller school districts will not benefit

23Darling, "Is Central Processing for You?" op. cit., p. 6153.

24Aceto, op. cit., p. 324.
as fully as a larger system from a centralized unit. The James' study indicated that many variables entered into determining the per unit cost of materials depending on the library program for that particular school system. Miss James found that one school system might be able to process 12,826 pieces of material for 55¢ per unit while another system had an operational cost of 65¢ per unit for 25,989 pieces.25

Aceto's conclusion from his study of New York State was that a minimum of 10,000 books per year was necessary to make a center feasible and 20,000 books per year to make it economical. The Niagra-Orleans Center is smaller, processing 6,000 books a year and it is mechanized.26

Other considerations in determining the feasibility of central processing is the future of the library program in the system. If the system is planning on new buildings or the initiation of new libraries over a period of many years, central processing may be more economical than commercial processing. If libraries are understaffed professionally and clerically, central processing may be a needed service.

It should also be considered if space is readily available within the school system. Available space minimizes the expense of building or renting central processing facilities. If clerical personnel have been hired for each library for

25James, op. cit., p. 42.

the sole purpose of processing, it might be more economical
to centralize and reduce staff. This does not mean staff
reduction in already understaffed areas.

If these considerations and all others relating to
the individual school system dictate that all materials can
be processed at least as economically as commercial cataloging
or the administration decides it is feasible, the decision
to centralize is made and the planning stage begins.

Planning

The planning stage of setting up a centralized
processing center should include a thorough study and in­
vestigation by school officials, library coordinator, the
professional processing staff, and librarians. This
investigation should include the following:

1. A survey of existing procedures and cataloging
   needs in the system,
2. Reading of professional literature on central
cataloging and related topics,
3. A study of, or visits to cataloging departments
   of universities and government agencies for
   suggestions on procedures,
4. Visits to established central processing centers
   in the near area and those operating under
   conditions similar to the system under study,
5. Investigation of various pieces of equipment
   for processing of materials,
6. Trying out several techniques, procedures and
   equipment,
7. Setting up a committee of librarians representing
   all grade levels to confer with the processing
   center staff,
8. Learning curricular topics. 27

27Wiese and Whitehorn, op. cit., p. 3.
All services of the center should be mapped out in detail. Many centers not only process all print material, but also the non-print. Some techniques which are peculiar to certain librarians may have to be discarded for the sake of efficiency.

Professional libraries are sometimes included in the center and also the offices of the library coordinator and the head of audio-visual services. It has also been suggested in the literature that the processing center handle bindery books and the mending of materials, although this doesn't appear to be a common service performed by the centers now in existence.

Through careful planning, central processing centers can operate smoothly and efficiently during the first year in operation. Continuous evaluation must then become a part of the processing center's program. Revisions will have to be made, but this is much different than a trial and error procedure of starting an operation.

Summary and Recommendations

It is obvious throughout this research that much careful planning and thought goes into the establishment of a central processing center. The economics of the center must be studied by administrators and librarians to discover the initial cost of the operation, the continuing costs in terms of salaries, supplies and facilities, the availability of transportation for materials, the services offered by the center.
No definite conclusions can be drawn as to the pupil size of the district considering centralized processing to make a center economical or even feasible. It is more conclusive to use the number of volumes to be processed annually as the basis for feasibility. Earlier studies indicate that centers are functioning with only 6,000 new volumes a year. Some authors believe that the number of volumes to be processed yearly should exceed 10,000 and that as a center becomes established the number of volumes processed per year should increase to continue to make the center operate at maximum efficiency. This also means that the center should be working at capacity at all times during the school year.

It has already been discussed that printed cards can allow the center to process more materials more quickly and in turn make the center more economical.

Other responsibilities of the center need to be considered, also, in determining staff size.

The major issue is what price, in terms of money and service, is the system willing to pay to have media processed.

The literature indicates that at least one state, Hawaii, processes at the state level and that there are also regional processing centers in Georgia and Florida. For Iowa, which is composed primarily of small community school districts, processing on a larger level other than at the system level will probably be the most economical course of action.

Iowa is divided into sixteen areas with Resource Centers functioning on various degrees of competencies.
If these Area Resource Centers could give direction in the field of central processing, the smaller schools as well as the larger ones in the state could profit.

The use of the Area Resource Centers for processing appears to be a logical step in economically utilizing the sixteen area plan in the state. Processing for local school districts should most certainly be considered in the future, even if it is rejected as unfeasible.

Central processing centers can be feasible in a few Iowa schools, although the number of large districts in Iowa is limited at this time. The school system must have a commitment to total library service, kindergarten through senior high.
CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Besides the use of library literature to obtain information concerning methods of processing materials in a school system, a comparison will be made with three school systems in Iowa, all of which have central processing centers. The school systems are Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and Marshalltown. These systems have been chosen not only because they do have functioning processing centers, but also because they represent three distinct school populations.

Questionnaires will be sent to the professional in charge of the central processing center to obtain information concerning staff size, amount of materials handled, number of schools serviced, cost of processing materials, etc. A brief questionnaire will also be sent to several librarians in each school district to get their attitudes concerning the service provided.
Librarians to be contacted:

**Cedar Rapids**

Mrs. Marna Shinn  
346 2nd Avenue S.W.  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa  52404

Vincent Barton  
Kennedy High School  
4545 Wenig Road N.E.  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa  42402

Mrs. Mildred Wolf  
McKinley Junior High  
620 10th Street S.E.  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa  52404

Miss Karen Christensen  
Coolidge Elementary School  
6225 First Avenue S.W.  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa  52404

**Des Moines**

Edwin W. Richardson  
1800 Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa  50307

Mrs. Hilda Womack  
Hoover High School  
4800 Aurora Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa  50310

Mrs. Rachel Champion  
Joseph Brody Junior High  
2101 S.W. Park  
Des Moines, Iowa  50321

Miss Greta Faye Mix  
Park Avenue Elementary  
3141 S.W. Ninth Street  
Des Moines, Iowa  50315

**Marshalltown**

Mrs. Lois Bergman  
11 South 7th Avenue  
Marshalltown, Iowa  50158

Mrs. Dorothy Bair  
Lenihan Junior High  
212 W. Ingledue  
Marshalltown, Iowa  50158
Mrs. Eleanor Flora  
Anson Junior High  
South 3rd Avenue  
Marshalltown, Iowa  50158

Mrs. Vera Nelson  
Fisher Elementary  
2001 South 4th Street  
Marshalltown, Iowa  50158
1. Total number of hours per week spent by all professionals for the purpose of central processing?

2. Total number of weeks per school year worked by professionals in central processing?

3. Total number of hours per week spent by all nonprofessionals for the purpose of central processing?

4. Total number of weeks per school year worked by nonprofessionals in central processing?

5. Where is the processing done?
   ____ portion of one school library
   ____ Administration building
   ____ other separate facilities

6. Approximate square feet provided for centralized processing

7. Number of schools serviced

8. How are materials transported to individual buildings

9. Approximate number of materials processed per year:
   Print __________________ Non-Print __________________

10. Is commercial processing also used? ____ What percentage

11. Are printed catalog cards purchased? ____ What percentage

12. Total approximate cost to process a single item

   This cost includes:
   ____ Cards, pockets, jackets
   ____ Professional salaries
   ____ Nonprofessional salaries
   ____ Overhead (Lights, heat)
   ____ Transportation
   ____ Work area
   ____ Fringe benefits for employees
13. Is the central processing center given a budget? ___ If no, how are supplies purchased?

14. What is the average length of time that materials are in the processing area after they have been received from the publisher and/or jobber?

FURTHER COMMENTS:
1. What do you feel to be the biggest advantages of having materials processed in a central location?

2. What, if any, are the disadvantages?

3. Are you able to do your own media selection?

4. What is the approximate time between placing an order and receiving the processed materials?
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Selecting three school districts of varying sizes, all of which have central processing centers for their libraries proved to verify many of the comments made in the literature. (See Appendix E)

The Des Moines central processing center is indicated as serving 78 schools—all of the schools in the district. Not all of the Des Moines elementary schools have libraries or media centers, so this is somewhat misleading, except that the center serves as a clearing house, or depot, for classroom type collections. Cedar Rapids is now serving 28 schools in their district. More new elementary libraries are being added every year in this system and the work load will naturally increase. In efficiency evaluation, this corresponds to the remark concerning increase in volume as the center progresses (see p. 21). The portion of the Marshalltown center surveyed, serves four secondary schools, one of which was new this year. Because this has not proved economical, next year this center will include 12 elementary schools, now being served by another central processing staff.

All of the processing centers have one full-time professional librarian, each spending their entire work week in the processing center. Marshalltown has eighty hours of clerical work in the center, Cedar Rapids has
eighty hours plus some additional part-time help, and Des Moines has 196 hours of clerical assistance. Having clerical employees do the majority of the processing, with the librarian involved in only professional tasks enables the center to handle a greater volume of work. Cedar Rapids, using a smaller number of clerks, have them working on a full year basis.

Non-print materials are processed in all of the centers, although no breakdown between print and non-print was available for Marshalltown. There is a great variance in the number of materials processed between the three school districts. And, the largest district, Des Moines, only processes 45% of the number of materials processed by Cedar Rapids. Marshalltown is very small, processing only 6,000, or one-tenth, the number of materials as Cedar Rapids.

A cost analysis by Des Moines reveals that cost per item is $1.10, in Cedar Rapids the cost is 70¢ per item and in Marshalltown there has been no cost study.

As the literature indicated the size of the school system is not as important in determining feasibility as the number of items to be processed.

An even more important recommendation of the literature—the importance of preplanning and a feasibility study and the need for constant evaluation of the processing center in terms of cost and services, has been omitted in Marshalltown and the center is not proving to be feasible, let alone economical.

A recommendation to the Des Moines system to lower their per item cost would be to not use commercial processing,
but rather to use printed cards. This would not only decrease processing costs, but also allow the center to reduce its clerical staff.

Books spend too much time in the Des Moines processing center. It is not understandable why this happens with their staff size and the use of commercial cataloging. In Marshalltown, books must remain in the processing center longer than necessary because of having a "book run" only once a week.

More evaluation should be done in Marshalltown and Des Moines. The Des Moines processing center is certainly feasible, but it could be made more economical. At this time, Marshalltown central processing is undergoing staff reduction. A thorough economic study should be made for further feasibility.

Comments from Librarians

Three librarians from each of the three school systems surveyed were sent questionnaires regarding their experiences with the central processing of materials. Their comments followed closely to advantages and disadvantages given in the literature. All librarians were able to do their own selection.

The main advantage of central processing as listed by the answering librarians was one of quality library service--more free time to work with students and teachers. One librarian commented that she had to do so much disciplining that she simply would not have had time to process books.
A librarian in a new school library said that this was the only way the collection would have been processed and still have given her the time to initiate a library program for the school.

Other quality comments were that cataloging was uniform, and that materials were ready for circulation upon arrival at the school. Many remarks indicated that these librarians were also concerned with the economics of central processing centers. One librarian in Marshalltown noted the elimination of large workroom area in the individual schools and that less clerical help was required in each school. A Cedar Rapids librarian is aware of larger discounts on materials and supplies that are received by the central processing unit.

Cedar Rapids' librarians seemed concerned over problems of cataloging, mainly from using 3-C catalog cards. But even this did not seem monumental to these librarians. Many librarians indicated less familiarity with the materials under central processing. This is still a problem of the librarian and not the processing center.

Also considered a disadvantage was the time the books were in the processing center. In Des Moines, the time lag does seem somewhat long. In Cedar Rapids, the librarians may have forgotten just how long it takes materials to come from the jobber.

One last comment given by a librarian was that under central processing, there were less jobs for the student assistants!
The Des Moines' librarians seemed the most dissatisfied with their central processing center indicating the time involved to get materials and the lack of consistency in cataloging and processing. Since these two items should be strong advantages to central processing, it would seem that Des Moines should re-evaluate polices and procedures. Their center is feasible and could be made more economical and serviceable.

There were no complaints regarding the service received from the processing center in Marshalltown, but the work load dictates good service. The biggest problem is that it is too expensive and therefore drains money for other library use. Even with the addition of the elementary schools, it is questionable if the center will be feasible. However, not all of the elementary schools have a certified librarian and none have a full-time librarian, so a central cataloger is needed to organize elementary collections. It is only logical that the four secondary schools be also serviced through this center.

Cedar Rapids is the most economical of the three centers surveyed. This is an example of planning and continuous study and a total commitment to excellence in library service, kindergarten through senior high.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A

CATALOGING WITH PRINTED CARDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Cards</th>
<th>No Printed Cards</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prof. time per book</td>
<td>3 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cler. time per book</td>
<td>4 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. cost per book</td>
<td>30¢ (3 x 10¢)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cler. Cost per book</td>
<td>12¢ (4 x 3¢)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAVING</td>
<td>Prof.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cler.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilson cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total saving</td>
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APPENDIX B

Responses to questions concerning the operation of the central processing centers in three Iowa school systems. Listed according to size of district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Des Moines</th>
<th>Cedar Rapids</th>
<th>Marshalltown</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>40</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>80+</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100+</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Separate</td>
<td>Admin.</td>
<td>Separate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>School truck</td>
<td>School truck</td>
<td>School truck</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. (Print)</td>
<td>21,000</td>
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<td>(A-V)</td>
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<td>10.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>no</td>
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<td>yes, 75%</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>$1.10</td>
<td>$.70</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
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