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Library Cooperation

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Abstract

Sometimes school people feel that combining the school library and the public library in the school building should be encouraged because this will make more efficient use of school and municipal funds. The reasoning behind this lies in reducing the duplication of materials and facilities. The idea sounds fine on paper, but "unless the answer has in it something that indicates the services will be improved or increased, I doubt if the project is worth doing."

LIBRARY COOPERATION

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Department of Library Science
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Myron Dean McGrew
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Sometimes school people feel that combining the school library and the public library in the school building should be encouraged because this will make more efficient use of school and municipal funds. The reasoning behind this lies in reducing the duplication of materials and facilities. The idea sounds fine on paper, but "unless the answer has in it something that indicates the services will be improved or increased, I doubt if the project is worth doing."¹

The school library and the public library serve completely different audiences and operate on different assumptions. The school library, of necessity, must support the curriculum of that school. The public library, on the other hand, exists for the purpose of serving the entire reading public in that community from cradle to grave. Because of these vast differences in the school and the public library, the chances of successfully combining the two systems is almost infinitesimal. This is not to say that the school library and the public library cannot enter into a profitable cooperative agreement.

Cooperation is essentially a development of the twentieth century. Its evolution has its roots in the social, economic and technological changes of the last half century.

¹Dorothy A. McGinniss, Libraries and Youth: Cooperation to Give Services to Children and Young People, (Syracuse, New York: School of Library Science, Syracuse University, 1968), p. 9.

Without some sort of cooperation between libraries, the requirements of readers using increased leisure with some sort of serious motive, and the availability of books and periodicals as sources of information to those engaged in bringing this about, change would be severely limited.

The concept of cooperation must be thoroughly understood by librarians and wholeheartedly accepted if excellent service is to be achieved.

Excellence in library service is simply - service that makes available to every single person the materials that he needs and wants and the assistance he requires to make good use of them at the time and place of his choice, within reason.²

Cooperation is becoming more essential as time goes on. It is more or less common knowledge that many libraries and information centers are facing increasingly difficult problems in adequately serving their patrons. Increasing demands are being made on libraries by the large number of patrons being served, the size of the collections which must be processed and stored, the mounting costs for book acquisitions, and the steadily growing demands for processing capability.

In a recent planning study prepared for Harvard, it is estimated that over an eleven year span (from 1965-1976) salary and wage costs (amounting to over 70 per cent of the total library expenditures) would increase by 155 per cent. The same study claims that in 1976, on the average, the library will have to acquire one-third more books and periodicals in each of its present fields of collections in order to maintain no more than its present level of coverage.³

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Gerard Salton, "On the Development of Libraries and Information Centers," Library Journal, 95:3433, October, 1970.

This study was prepared for Harvard University and deals with their situation, but the same data can easily be generalized to cover the American public schools. As we have been reading in the newspapers, in many areas of the country, the taxpayers have been increasingly defeating bond issues, tax increases and any other measures which might indicate spending more money on education.

Librarians sometimes blindly believe that library budgets and centrally located library space will expand indefinitely, given only a sufficient amount of good-will among administrators and budget officers. A common result of this faith is the conservative stance of librarians in maintaining their inefficient methods in their day-to-day operations.

More than anything else, the budget crisis, which can never be solved by librarians alone, appears to insure a decrease in the autonomy of individual libraries and consequently an increase in the pressures toward greater rationalization of library operations and organizations. As more material is collected, individual libraries will become less self-sufficient than is the case at present and changes in outlook and procedures will become manditory.⁴

The time is rapidly approaching when officials in both the public and school library systems will be forced to take a realistic look at the costs of the services being offered to patrons, and whether there is a more efficient method of offering these services.

There are fabulous plans written about in the literature

⁴Ibid., p. 3434.

concerning such things as inter-connected teletype systems, state-wide processing and various other cooperative ventures. These plans all have much to recommend them, but it is doubtful that these plans will have much effect upon the school libraries of Iowa for some time to come.

Despite their excuses for not entering into cooperative agreements, libraries must enter into this territory in the interest of providing better services for their patrons.

Many librarians still feel that even in the face of a vastly growing publication rate and author population, their library still hopes to achieve comprehensiveness and completeness in its collections for most subject areas, because the alternatives, interlibrary loans and cooperative requisitions are distasteful to librarians and public alike. "I know of no profession whose members, for the most part, are as reluctant to make changes as those of the library profession."⁵

When considering cooperation, libraries most frequently look to their neighboring libraries. While local cooperation is very desirable, and should be encouraged, state-wide programs can have much wider impact upon libraries than is possible on a local basis. In 1962 New Jersey began work on a plan which can serve as a guide for other cooperative programs. The plan was based on the three basic beliefs listed below.

A. Each person, no matter where he lived within the state, should have access to a local school and a local public library which complied with reasonable standards.

⁵Ibid., p. 3435.

B. If the school or hometown library were insufficient for his requirements, he should have access to an area with substantial subject reference, bibliographical and periodical collections with adequate readers' seats and a reasonable schedule of hours of service.

C. Should the area reference library be insufficient, he should be able to be referred to a research level library according to his requirements.⁶

In 1967 the New Jersey Legislature passed a law which provided for the following ideas:

A. That the state share much more fully in the support of the public libraries and that its share of support should increase in proportion to local efforts.

B. That the state should share in the support of area reference libraries which would number twenty to twenty-five and would be built upon the strength of existing libraries in various parts of the state.

C. That grants should be made to the libraries of Rutgers and Princeton Universities, the New Jersey State Library in Trenton and the Newark Public Library to serve as a network of resource libraries.

D. That the State Library should serve as a reference referral and clearing house center, and that a statewide committee on research resources should be formed to assist in the development of the research library collections and services.⁷

A basic aspect of the New Jersey Plan is that the student will begin at his local school or public library and proceed through the established channels in his search. The idea of this is to give each level of library a chance to do its job and see how it measures up. At times the top level libraries have been reluctant to provide service, but the beauty of this plan is that the local public or school library can insist upon service, since the resource libraries have received grants for services rendered.

⁶McGinniss, op. cit., p. 23-24.

⁷Ibid., p. 24.

Dade County, Florida has a cooperative public and school library system which includes some of the following services:

1. Loans of public library book collections to schools to serve as interim libraries.
2. Selective checklists of recent books for children and young people.
3. Participation by the public library staff members with the school librarian in teacher orientation.
4. Regularly scheduled visitations by public library staff members to elementary schools.
5. Class visitations to the public library.
6. Joint experimental studies.

Most of these services are desirable and have much to recommend them. For the most part the Dade County System is fostering understanding between the public and the school libraries by encouraging the staffs of both facilities to become acquainted with the problems of the other. Students are introduced to the public library and encouraged to use it whenever they wish. The "service" offered to the schools by the loans of public library book collections to serve as interim libraries is actually a hindrance to the school program since this gives the school district a way to shirk its responsibilities in providing a first rate education to the children of the district.

California has been working for quite some time to perfect their system of interlibrary loans. The goal is that ultimately, "any individual in the state should be able to get any circulating material that any library in the state

⁸John P. McIntyre, "Library Cooperation in Dade County," ALA Bulletin, 59:540, June, 1965.

has, by merely applying at his local public library."⁹ It is necessary to impress upon the local libraries that they are not limited to the collections they have locally.

The California State Library has one of the oldest regional catalogs in the United States. It began in 1909 as a union list of periodicals in the state. In 1914 a Library of Congress card depository was acquired from the Denver Public Library. In 1953 the State Library pulled together two million Library of Congress cards from its Union Catalog to form a printed catalog. "Eighty libraries are currently contributing an average of twenty-two thousand cards per month, about forty-six thousand titles and editions were added last year."¹⁰

The procedure generally indicates that the patron begin with his local library. If the local library does not have the desired material it contacts other members of the system, usually by telephone, to check their holdings. If the systems' libraries do not have the desired items, the originating library forwards the request to the State Library. The State Library goes through its Union Catalog of almost two million titles, and if the desired material is not found in this Union Catalog, the search is usually dropped. However, the State Library publishes a monthly list of unlocated books.

⁹Eugene Pike, "Interlibrary Loan Developments: California," RQ, 7:111, Spring, 1968.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 111.

This list which contains from sixty to one hundred books is circulated to about one hundred thirty libraries in the state and to the Pacific Northwest Bibliographic Center in Seattle. The State Library is anxious that the patron not skip any of the prescribed steps in the procedure, since this helps make the local library aware of any deficiencies it may have.

"Lowell Martin in his report, estimated that approximately two-fifths of the prospective borrowers had to wait more than two weeks for an interlibrary loan."¹¹ The State Library places part of the blame for this poor service on the postal system, but this appears to be a weak attempt to use the postal service as a whipping boy. They also state that part of the problems lie in the fact that the local libraries do not make a thorough enough search for the material before sending the request to the State Library. The problems appear to be as much a result of bureaucratic red tape as any one other cause.

The California network places fairly heavy dependence upon the telephone, and this appears to be more practical than installing a teletype system. One of the major weaknesses in the California system is its failure to include the public schools in the system.

The Pennsylvania system consists of thirty library centers serving both individuals and local libraries within the state. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the Free

¹¹Ibid., p. 113.

Library of Philadelphia, and the Pennsylvania State University Library have been designated as resource centers. The State Library in Harrisburg serves as a fourth resource center and the coordinator of the system.

Requests are placed with the local libraries who conduct a search of their facility. If the local library cannot locate the desired material, the request is forwarded to one of the thirty district centers. If the district center is unable to locate the material the request is forwarded to one of the four resource centers. The resource centers forward the unfilled requests to the State Library which transmits referrals to the Union Library Catalog in Philadelphia on the teletype. The reply comes back over the teletype within ten to fifteen minutes with a list of where the materials can be found. "The Union Library files have yielded locations for eighty per cent of the referrals from the State Library."¹²

A few local libraries still by-pass the channels, but the compliance with procedures is improving. The system is effective in locating materials. "Dr. Martin's study revealed that over two-thirds of the requests for loans from local to district libraries were filled promptly by district librarians. The State Library fills about one-half of all requests it receives."¹³ Nearly one-half of all requests filled at the State Library are completed within a week. In an effort to

¹²Charles H. Ness, "Interlibrary Loan Development: Pennsylvania," RQ, 7:115, Spring, 1968.

¹³Ibid., p. 115.

promote service, many district centers pay the cost of telephone calls received from libraries in their districts. The State Library also provides free telephone service to all district centers.

The Pennsylvania approach is very successful as is shown by the statistics indicating the degree of success in locating items. The teletype at the state level is a good idea, but the whole system would work even better if the Union List could be moved from Philadelphia to Harrisburg. Schools should also be included in the system.

In 1965 the Illinois General Assembly passed legislation providing for establishment grants, area and per capita grants, equalization grants, and for research and reference centers. The Chicago Public Library, the University of Illinois Library at Urbana, Morris Library at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, and the State Library in Springfield were designated as the four Research and Reference Centers. Most of the libraries which were accustomed to turning to the universities continued to do so; those accustomed to starting their search at the State Library continued this practice as did those libraries which considered Chicago to be the center of communications. In a sense, the 1965 legislation began to compensate these large libraries for a kind of service which had been in existence for years.

All citizens without tax-supported public library service must, by law, be served direct by the State Library. The Chicago Public Library will loan most copies, but borrowers

living within a fifty mile radius are expected to use the library direct rather than via interlibrary loan.

The State Library still serves many public libraries in the state direct, either because they have not yet joined a system, or because the local system has not developed sufficiently to provide service. Direct service is phased out on a twenty-four month schedule after a system director is appointed, unless the system requests earlier termination of direct service to member libraries.

Criticisms have been raised by the systems and centers themselves. "Primarily, the complaints from the systems have centered on red tape, slowness of service, lack of flexibility in rules, charges for copying services, inadequate communication between centers and systems and lack of a system voice in making center policies."¹⁴

The research and reference center appropriation was eliminated by the Illinois Senate from the State budgetary appropriation for the 1967-69 biennium. This has forced a re-thinking of the program. Illinois is leaning in the direction of interlibrary loans. The system has been slowed down because of a shortage of money, but the libraries are continuing the loans on a more informal basis now. The small libraries in the state have been urged to install telephones and the system accepts collect calls from the member libraries.

¹⁴Mary Jane MacDonald, "Interlibrary Loan Developments: Illinois," RQ, 7:118, Spring, 1968.

In 1965 Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act with the intention of improving the American education system. Title II of this Act provided funds to be spent on media and library resources. All states submitted plans of how they intended to use the money. Forty-nine of the states decided to divide their money among the local schools of their states. Iowa took the unique approach of dividing the state into sixteen sub-agencies composed of a multi-county area. The Federal funds were used to buy materials which were placed in the sixteen area centers.

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction was the official responsible for the operation of the plan and he appointed an Advisory Committee composed of professional educators from throughout the state to help decide the direction of the Title II program in Iowa. In addition, each of the sixteen areas had a selection committee composed of teachers, administrators and media personnel.

The idea of setting up these areas was to provide the schools throughout the state, both public and private, with materials which are too expensive for each individual district to afford. Included in this list would be such items as 16mm films and some expensive art books.

In order for the materials to be used to the fullest extent it is necessary that each area center know what they have on hand, in short, a catalog of materials. To assure this end the state stipulated: "Library resources, including

audio-visual resources, will be cataloged and processed. A book and/or card catalog, including a shelf list will be maintained by the regional public sub-agency."¹⁵

The Iowa Plan for Title II provided that the money be divided on the following basis: "Forty per cent of the money on a per-enrolled child basis; thirty per cent on a wealth per child basis using an inverse ratio; and the final thirty per cent on the basis of a relative need factor."¹⁶ Many people consider that the allocation of thirty per cent of the funds on a basis of relative need is useless since Iowa is a relatively prosperous agricultural state, however, there is a reason to provide for the needy in Iowa. "It is interesting to note that the per cent of incidence of poverty in Iowa (9%) ranks alongside that of New York (9.7%) and California (9.6%) in the national picture."¹⁷

The intention of this plan is that the Federal funds supplement local and state expenditures rather than supplant them. The Iowa Plan specifies that all the funds be spent for school library resources and none may be spent for any other instructional materials such as textbooks. All students and teachers within the geographic boundaries may use the re-

¹⁵Iowa State Department of Public Instruction, Iowa's State Plan for Title II Elementary and Secondary Education Act, (Des Moines, 1967), p. 15.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁷Governor's Advisory Council on Libraries, The Long Range Plan for the Development of Library Service for the Citizens of Iowa, (Des Moines, 1972), p. 6.

sources of that area regardless of who is responsible for the funding of their school.

When considering library cooperation we all too often think of the public library. While it is agreed that the public libraries need to cooperate, it is seldom realized that school libraries must also cooperate if they hope to provide their students with a first rate education. Informal agreements among several neighboring schools is needed, and for this type of arrangement telephone communication is fine, but we must be careful that we do not stop here.

When planning for a cooperative arrangement we should keep in mind that the state should be included since they can easily eliminate many of the minor civil boundaries which can cause such insoluble problems and the state is large enough to serve as a base for most network purposes. The New Jersey Plan seems to have the most to recommend it. The hierarchical design is needed in this case to get the materials as close to the local library as possible, and the idea of including both school and public libraries in the system adds to the strength of the system.

As a beginning on the local scene, the school and public librarians can do much to foster understanding of their problems with their counterparts. The school and public librarian should confer weekly about any problems they are having. A system whereby the school librarian could check out materials needed from the public library, and vice versa,

should not be too difficult to implement.

Selection committees with representatives from each library could meet to decide which purchases should be duplicated and which could be used to supplement the collection of the other facility. Library staff from all participating libraries, teachers, community representatives and youth representatives should serve on this committee. By including a cross-section of the community on the selection committee and also on any committees charged with planning and other cooperative projects will greatly enhance the public relations program of the libraries involved.

Classes should take field trips to the public library where the public librarian can give library instruction to the students in the use of the public library. Both the public librarian and the school librarian should make a point of visiting their counter-part periodically for a day at a time to get a first-hand view of the operations of the other facility and the problems involved. By improving their understanding, both libraries should be able to provide better service to the school children.

A state-wide cooperative program will take extra time, effort and money because of the problems in communication which will arise, but the end result will be worth the time and money because of the extra service which can be offered to the patron. Quality education is expensive, but even more expensive is the waste of human resources in poorly educated students whose talents are lost to this nation.

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