

1975

University of Northern Iowa Prospective Elementary Teachers' Attitudes Toward School Media Programs

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University of Northern Iowa

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University of Northern Iowa Prospective Elementary Teachers' Attitudes Toward School Media Programs

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Abstract

This report will deal with the question of attitudes. The problems to be looked into are twofold. The first, what attitudes toward elementary school library/media programs are held by prospective elementary teachers, is the main concern of the study. However, this problem suggests another; what attitudes toward elementary school librarians/media specialists are held by prospective elementary teachers. This second problem will also be considered in this report.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
PROSPECTIVE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD
SCHOOL MEDIA PROGRAMS

A Research Paper
Presented to the
Faculty of the Library Science Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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April 9, 1975

Read and approved by

Mary Lou McGrew

Elizabeth Martin

Accepted by Department
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Date 4/14/75

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In past years a considerable amount of effort has been put forth to provide prospective teachers with library/media training in both the skill and cognitive areas. While the need for this training is not being debated there remains a third level of learning which has been neglected. This is the area of attitudes--the affective domain.

This report will deal with the question of attitudes. The problems to be looked into are twofold. The first, what attitudes toward elementary school library/media programs are held by prospective elementary teachers, is the main concern of the study. However, this problem suggests another; what attitudes toward elementary school librarians/media specialists are held by prospective elementary teachers. This second problem will also be considered in this report.

It is felt that the most important thing that is taught in teacher education is the area of feelings and attitudes.¹ The author of this paper has found evidence that there has been little emphasis on the attitudes toward library/media programs in elementary teacher education programs. It seems necessary, however, to make a quantitative study to prove this discrepancy between what is needed and what is supplied.

¹Dr. W. C. Meierhenry, "Media Centers Present New Challenges to Teacher Education," Illinois Librarian, 52:728-30, September 1970.

Hypotheses

Several statements were tested in this study. These are:

1. Over 50 percent of prospective elementary teachers view the primary function of the librarian/media specialist as providing supplementary enrichment materials for the students.²

2. Over 50 percent of prospective elementary teachers view the librarian/media specialist as a provider of free time.

3. Less than 50 percent of prospective elementary teachers view the librarian/media specialist as an aide in planning curriculum and teaching strategies.³

4. Over 50 percent of prospective elementary teachers feel that the librarian/media specialist is incapable or unqualified to give worthwhile opinions on curriculum.⁴

Assumptions

In this study it is assumed that teacher attitudes are recognized as an important factor in education and that the attitudes of prospective elementary teachers will be reflected in their future teaching.

²Jerry L. Walker, "What Do Student Teachers Know About Libraries?", School Libraries, 16:17-18+, Winter 1967.

³Walker, p. 18.

⁴Emma Ruth Christine, "Why Not Listen To the Librarian?", ALA Bulletin, 59:1010-11, December 1965.

Limitations

This study is limited to prospective elementary teachers at the University of Northern Iowa who have not had their student teaching experience but have completed or are currently enrolled in Elementary Methods and Materials (21:101).

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions have been made:

Curriculum--all of the courses and what is taught in them.

Enrichment--all learning experiences which are not included in the curriculum.

School library/media program--all programs which have originated in the library/media center or with the librarian/media specialist or in which the library/media center or the librarian/media specialist plays a major part.

School librarian/media specialist--a person with a B.A. or higher degree, certified to be a school librarian/media specialist, and hired to serve in that capacity.

Review of Literature

A review was made of all literature available at the library of the University of Northern Iowa which pertains to the attitudes of prospective teachers toward school library/media programs and school librarians/media specialists.

An extensive study was conducted by Ralph Perkins in the years 1961 through 1964. Tests measuring knowledge of library fundamentals were given to 4,170 seniors enrolled in pre-teaching courses in 69 colleges. It was concluded that prospective teachers are incapable of using library materials successfully and that their knowledge of library resources is limited. Perkins stated that "evidence shows that most teachers use an extremely low proportion of library resources. Improvement depends upon the attitudes of teachers" ⁵

Mary Virginia Gaver wrote a report on a questionnaire which was developed by the Committee on Professional Status and Growth of the American Association of School Librarians. This questionnaire was distributed in 1964 to 1,209 colleges and universities to determine the extent which teachers at the college/university level are acquainted with the nature, function, and effective use of the school library/media program in both public classroom teaching and in the educational program in general. Gaver concluded that "many teachers do not understand the role of the school library in the modern school or are apathetic in accepting any part in it." ⁶

In 1966 a questionnaire was devised and carried out by

⁵Ralph Perkins, Prospective Teachers' Knowledge of Library Fundamentals, (New York: Scarecrow, 1965), p. 1010.

⁶Mary Virginia Gaver, "Teacher Education and School Librarians," ALA Bulletin, 60:63-72, January 1966.

Jerry L. Walker. The Walker questionnaire was given to Illinois student teachers and included eleven factual questions and two open-ended questions which asked the informants to name ways in which the library and librarian could be of service in teaching. It was found that the student teachers viewed the library and librarian as adjuncts to their teaching and not an integral part of it. Walker concluded his report with the grim statement: "I suspect that new teachers all over the country have equally vague notions of effective ways to utilize the library's resources."⁷

Although not a specific study, Paul W. F. Witt delivered a speech to the members of the American Association of School Librarians in 1964 in which he outlined the deficiencies in teacher education programs in regard to school libraries. He did not place the blame entirely on the teacher educators, however. Witt noted that "the attitudes of students in teacher education programs are . . . influential in determining the kind of preparation they receive."⁸ According to Gaver, Witt's "analysis [of teacher education and school libraries] was accepted by audience as a very critical but fair statement of the situation."⁹

⁷Walker, p. 17.

⁸Paul W. F. Witt, "Teacher Education and School Libraries," School Libraries, 14:37-45, October 1964.

⁹Gaver, p. 64.

No studies were located which were primarily concerned with teacher or prospective teacher attitudes toward the school library/media program or the school librarian/media specialist. What is indicated in the studies, however, is a need for a commitment to the most efficient and effective learning on the part of teachers and prospective teachers.

Methodology

The data for this study were collected through the use of a questionnaire. This questionnaire was mailed to all students who were identified as being enrolled in the course Elementary Methods and Materials (21:101) at the University of Northern Iowa in the 1975 Spring semester. It was also mailed to those students who completed the Elementary Methods and Materials course in the 1974 Fall semester but who had not begun student teaching. Lists of these persons were solicited from Dr. Robert Selwa in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, one of the course instructors. These lists were checked against lists of students currently student teaching and names appearing on both lists were eliminated from the study. Addresses and phone numbers were obtained from the University of Northern Iowa student directory.

The size of the sample was 160 students. Seventy-three were enrolled in Elementary Methods and Materials in the 1974 Fall semester and eighty-seven were enrolled in the 1975 Spring semester. Of this sample 143 question-

naires were returned, but three of these were received too late to be included in the tabulations. All results will therefore be based on 140 questionnaires (87.5 percent return). Of the questionnaires returned, 40.7 percent (57) were from juniors, 57.2 percent (80) were from seniors, and 2.1 percent (3) of the returns were from graduate students.

The questionnaire was originally mailed out with a cover letter (see Appendix A for a copy of the cover letter and the questionnaire) on February 8. One hundred responses were received and on February 18 postcards were mailed to the sixty students who had not responded (see Appendix B). On February 24 through February 27, telephone interviews were attempted with forty of the forty-four students not yet responding. Three attempts were made on different days and at different hours to reach each nonrespondant. Twenty-three of these students were contacted and interviewed. Four nonrespondants either had no telephone or resided outside of the Cedar Falls/Waterloo area. Letters (see Appendix C) and second copies of the questionnaire were mailed to the four on February 25. One questionnaire was returned. March 3, 1975 was the last day for questionnaires to be returned in order to be included in this study.

Analysis of Data

Once the questionnaires were received the answers for each question were totaled. In cases where two answers were indicated, the answer closest to "neutral" was chosen

for the tabulation. In addition to a simple quantitative tally, percentages were figured for the answers to each question. All percentages in this study were figured to the nearest tenth.

A third tabulation which was performed with the data was the computation of an agreement indicator for questions one through fourteen. This was determined by first assigning a scale of numbers to the ranges of opinions as shown:

Strongly Agree	5
Agree	4
Neutral	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

This assigned number was multiplied by the number of students who had chosen that opinion. These subtotals were added together and then divided by 140 (the total number of students in the sample). The number obtained (referred to as the agreement indicator in this report) will be used in the discussion of the data.

Two statements on the questionnaire were directly concerned with supplementary enrichment materials. The respondents felt that the primary function of a librarian/media specialist should be to provide enrichment materials for the students (statement 1). They also agreed that the library/media program should exist to provide enrichment materials (statement 10). The prospective elementary teachers must feel that the provision of enrichment ma-

terials is vital since a majority of them agreed that the library/media program should play a vital role in meeting the educational objectives of an elementary school (statement 14). The results of these three statements are shown:¹⁰

	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Agreement Indicator
Statement 1	87.9%	4.1
Statement 10	94.3%	4.4
Statement 14	95.0%	4.5

Statement 15 asked the participants to rank five elementary programs (art, guidance, library/media, music, and physical education) as to which could undergo the largest budget cut without seriously affecting the school's educational objectives. Of the five programs, library/media was given the smallest budget cut by 47.9 percent of the prospective teachers. It was given the second smallest cut by 25 percent. Thirteen (9.3 percent), however, either did not rank the programs at all or ranked them all the same. Comments were made to the effect that all of the the programs are of equal importance and thus the budgets should receive the same cuts.

A great percentage of the prospective elementary teachers felt that their students should have regularly

¹⁰A complete analysis of the data collected on all fifteen statements is located in Appendix D.

scheduled library periods in addition to being able to come to the library/media whenever the need arises (statement 11). Most of the respondents felt that they should not have to accompany their students when all of their students were making a scheduled visit to the library/media center (statement 12). Some of the prospective teachers felt that they should be able to send all of their students to the library/media center at unscheduled periods without their accompanying them (statement 13). A more specific account of the statements on scheduling is shown here:

	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Agreement Indicator
Statement 11	92.9%	4.4
Statement 12	72.9%	3.9
Statement 13	42.8%	3.1

The respondents generally agreed that the librarian/media specialist could advise teachers on the use of materials which might aid their teaching (statement 6). They were not quite as receptive when it came to advice on ching methods, however, (statement 7) as can be seen below:

	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Agreement Indicator
Statement 6	97.1%	4.6
Statement 7	51.9%	3.0

The prospective teachers agreed that the librarian/media specialist should serve as a consultant to all teach-

ing teams (statement 8). The feeling was a bit different, however, when it came to having the librarian/media specialist be an actual member of all teaching teams (statement 9). The results of these two statements are shown here:

	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Agreement Indicator
Statement 8	86.4%	4.1
Statement 9	50.7%	3.4

Statement 2 stated that a librarian/media specialist needs to be certified to teach at the elementary level. Sixty percent of the prospective elementary teachers either agreed or strongly agreed to this. There was less agreement as to whether the librarian/media specialist is qualified to construct units of study on subjects not related to library skills (statement 4). The respondents did not agree to limit the librarian/media specialist to just making bibliographies on subjects not related to library skills (statement 5). It was generally agreed that the librarian/media specialist was qualified to construct units of study on library skills (statement 3) as indicated on the following table:

	% Agree or Strongly Agree	Agreement Indicator
Statement 4	32.2%	3.0
Statement 5	30.7%	2.8
Statement 3	90.7%	4.3

Conclusion

Evidence was found and included in this report that over fifty percent of the prospective elementary teachers at the University of Northern Iowa view the primary function of the library/media specialist as providing supplementary enrichment materials for the students. They also seem to believe that the library/media program should exist to provide materials that supplement the regular classroom instruction. This feeling among prospective elementary teachers would seem to indicate that they do not feel that the library/media program plays a very important role in elementary education. However, on the opinion survey, most of the prospective teachers agreed that the library/media program should play a vital role in meeting the educational objectives of an elementary school. ^P Just how vital they feel the library/media program to be is shown by the program-ranking question. The library/media program received the most favorable ranking, topping art, guidance, music, and physical education. This question may not be completely valid, however, as the question did not state that the programs be ranked in order of importance, but rather that they be ranked according to how well they could sustain a budget cut, with the program least able to sustain a cut given top ranking. While in actual practice the size of a program's budget may serve as a relatively accurate indicator of how important that program is perceived to be, in a theoretical situation this may not hold true. As

there is no way to determine whether the participants ranked the programs by importance or strictly by consideration of budget, the results cannot be given much importance. Several students refused to rank the programs or ranked them all the same, which further affects the validity of the question.

Over fifty percent of the prospective elementary teachers view the librarian/media specialist as a provider of free time. They believe that their students should have a regularly scheduled library period even though the students may come to the library/media center whenever the need arises. This alone does not mean that the future teachers see the librarian/media specialist as a provider of free time. However, most of the participants feel that they should be able to send their students to the library/media center at the scheduled times without accompanying them. This would mean free, or planning, time for the teachers. In addition, nearly half of the prospective teachers agreed that should be able to send all of their students to the library/media center at unscheduled periods without accompanying them, thereby providing the teachers with a free period any time they want it.

When the librarian/media specialist is not providing free time for the prospective teachers there are several consultant/advisory roles which they agree he/she is capable of performing. Most of the prospective elementary teachers feel that the librarian/media specialist can act

in a consultant type role to the teaching teams of the school. They also agreed, although not as strongly, that the librarian/media specialist should be an actual member of all teaching teams.

The prospective teachers feel that the librarian/media specialist can advise the classroom teachers on the use of materials which could aid their teaching. Fewer felt that advise could be given on the use of methods. The generally positive attitude about the role that a librarian/media specialist is capable of playing in the elementary school, however, seems to indicate that the majority of the prospective elementary teachers answering the questionnaire view him/her as both capable and qualified to give worthwhile opinions on curriculum.

There is an area in which the prospective teachers do not agree that the library/media specialist is qualified. They disagree that the librarian/media specialist is qualified to construct units of study on subjects not related to library skills. Less than half would limit the librarian/media specialist to just constructing bibliographies of resources on the subjects not related to library skills, although there is no indication of what other things they had in mind: The prospective teachers did agree that the librarian/media specialist is qualified to construct units of study on library skills. Most of the participants also agreed that a library/media specialist in an elementary school needs to be certified to teach at the elementary

level.

The prospective elementary teachers at the University of Northern Iowa appear to be rather hazy about what a librarian/media specialist is able to do. They feel that the main function is to provide enrichment materials but would also allow the librarian/media specialist to perform certain other duties, which are partially indicated by the answers given to some of the questions. Further study is needed to determine more precisely what the prospective teachers feel the librarian/media specialist's role to be.

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Cover Letter and Questionnaire

uni

DEPARTMENT of LIBRARY SCIENCE

February 7, 1975

Dear Student;

Can you spare a few minutes? I am interested in finding out how you feel about elementary school libraries. I would appreciate your taking time to fill out the enclosed survey and return it as soon as possible. Your opinions will be included in a research report.

All information that you give will be held strictly confidential and your name will not be connected with the research report in any way.

Thank-you for your help.

Sincerely,

Chris Odell
110 B. Bartlett Hall
UNI
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Opinion Survey - page 1

a. What is your classification?

- Junior
 Senior
 Graduate

b. What semester did you take (are you taking) Elementary Methods and Materials?

- Fall 1974
 Spring 1975

c. What is your major? _____

What is your minor or subject field? _____

NOTE: On all following statements please consider the following terms to be interchangeable.

- librarian - media specialist
 library program - media program
 library - media center

d. Check the statement(s) which best describe(s) the library/ media center in the elementary school(s) you attended.

- no materials other than textbooks
 materials kept in each classroom
 bookmobile
 materials in place other than classroom such as
 hallway
 principal's office
 converted closet
 other (please describe) _____

Opinion Survey - page 2

e. Check the statement(s) which best describe(s) the person who was in charge of the library/media collection in the elementary school(s) you attended.

- no one person
 classroom teacher(s)
 clerk/secretary
 part-time librarian/media specialist
 full-time librarian/media specialist
 don't remember
 other (please describe) _____

On statements 1 - 14, circle the answer which best describes your opinion.

Strongly Agree - No doubt in your mind, this definitely is it.

Agree - May be some doubt, but you feel positively about it.

Neutral - You have no opinion or are undecided.

Disagree - May be some doubt, but you feel negatively about it.

Strongly Disagree - No doubt in your mind, a definite NO.

Remember that all statements apply to elementary schools only.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The primary function of a librarian/media specialist should be to provide enrichment materials for the students.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. A librarian/media specialist needs to be certified to teach at the elementary level.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. A librarian/media specialist is qualified to construct units of study on library skills.	SA	A	N	D	SD

Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

- | | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| 4. A librarian/media specialist is qualified to construct units of study on subjects NOT related to library skills (such as language arts or science units). | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 5. On subjects not related to library skills the librarian/media specialist is only qualified to construct bibliographies of resources. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 6. The librarian/media specialist can advise the classroom teachers on the use of materials which could aid their teaching. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 7. The librarian/media specialist can advise the classroom teachers on the use of methods which could aid their teaching. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 8. The librarian/media specialist should serve as a consultant to all teaching teams. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 9. The librarian/media specialist should be a member of all teaching teams. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 10. The library/media program should exist to provide materials that supplement the regular classroom instruction. | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 11. Students should have regularly scheduled library periods (assuming that they may also come to the library/media center whenever the need arises). | SA | A | N | D | SD |
| 12. Teachers should be able to send all of their students to the library/media center at <u>scheduled</u> periods without accompanying them. | SA | A | N | D | SD |

21
 Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Neutral
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

13. Teachers should be able to send all of their students to the library/media center at unscheduled periods without accompanying them. SA A N D SD

14. The library/media program should play a vital role in meeting the educational objectives of an elementary school. SA A N D SD

15. The five programs below all play a part in meeting the educational objectives of an elementary school. Assuming that all of the programs are equally funded to begin with, in which areas can the larger budget cuts be made without seriously affecting the school's educational objectives?

Mark the programs 1-5, with 1 indicating the smallest budget cut, 2 the next larger, and so on.

- _____ Art
- _____ Guidance
- _____ Library/Media
- _____ Music
- _____ Physical Education

Thank-you for your cooperation. Would you like a summary of the results of this survey? If so, please give your name and address:

Name _____

Address _____

Please return this survey promptly to:

Chris Odell
 110 B Bartlett Hall
 UNI

APPENDIX B

Sample of Follow-up Postcard

Dear Pam,

I'm missing you - or rather I'm missing your opinions on elementary libraries. Won't you please fill out and return the survey that you received about a week ago? If you have misplaced it call 273-6358 and leave a message and I'll send you another.

Thanks,

Chris Odell

P.S. If our letters have "crossed" in the mail, please disregard this card.

APPENDIX C

Sample of Follow-up Letter

110B Bartlett Hall
UNI
Cedar Falls, Ia. 50613
February 26, 1975

Dear Richard;

A couple of weeks ago I mailed a survey to you concerning libraries. Now, I know how busy you are with the block classes (having been through them myself) but could you please spare a few minutes (less than 10!) to complete and return the survey?

The results of this study will be used for a research paper and your answers will make a difference.

Sincerely,

Chris Odell

	Agreement Indicator	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1.	The primary function of a librarian/media specialist should be to provide enrichment materials for the students.	42	30.0	61	57.9	4	2.9	8	5.8	5	3.5
2.	A librarian/media specialist needs to be certified to teach at the elementary level.	37	26.4	47	33.6	26	18.6	30	21.4	0	-
3.	A librarian/media specialist is qualified to construct units of study on library skills.	52	37.1	75	53.6	10	7.9	3	2.1	0	-
4.	A librarian/media specialist is qualified to construct units of study on subjects NOT related to library skills.	6	4.3	39	27.9	50	35.7	40	28.6	5	3.5
5.	On subjects not related to library skills the librarian/media specialist is only qualified to construct bibliographies.	4	2.9	39	27.9	33	23.6	52	37.1	7	5.0
6.	The librarian/media specialist can advise the classroom teachers on the use of materials which could aid their teaching.	85	60.7	51	36.4	3	2.1	1	.7	0	-
7.	The librarian/media specialist can advise the classroom teachers on the use of methods which could aid their teaching.	20	20.0	44	31.4	27	19.3	30	21.4	1	.7
8.	The librarian/media specialist should serve as a consultant to all teaching teams.	41	29.3	80	57.1	15	10.8	3	2.1	1	.7
9.	The librarian/media specialist should be a member of all teaching teams.	20	14.3	51	36.4	40	28.6	27	19.3	2	1.4
10.	The library/media program should exist to provide materials that supplement the regular classroom instruction.	61	43.6	71	50.7	5	3.5	3	2.1	0	-
11.	Students should have regularly scheduled library periods.	70	50	60	42.9	6	4.3	3	2.1	1	.7
12.	Teachers should be able to send all of their students to the library/media center at scheduled periods without accompanying them.	39	27.9	63	45.0	22	15.7	16	11.4	0	-
13.	Teachers should be able to send all of their students to the library/media center at unscheduled periods without accompanying them.	16	11.4	44	31.4	25	17.9	42	30.0	13	9.3
14.	The library/media program should play a vital role in meeting the educational objectives of an elementary school.	83	59.3	50	35.7	6	4.3	1	.7	0	-
15. Item ranking:		1		2		3		4		5	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Art		5	3.5	18	12.9	47	33.6	31	22.1	25	17.9
Guidance		37	26.4	33	23.6	8	5.8	15	10.8	34	24.3
Library/Media		67	47.9	35	25.0	9	6.4	9	6.4	7	5.0
Music		4	2.9	17	12.1	32	22.9	43	30.7	26	18.6
Physical Education		9	6.4	24	17.1	30	21.4	24	17.1	35	25.0