

The Service Area of a Teachers College Library

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AND WHAT SERVICE shall the teachers college library render to its affiliated rural schools, its alumni, or teachers of the vicinity? May I describe what we are doing at the St. Cloud, Minn., State Teachers College Library.

We believe—perhaps all of you do—that there is need for service in these areas. So far, we have dealt most with the affiliated rural schools.

In our section of the country, central Minnesota, there are many rural schools. Affiliated with the college are twelve schools of which two are two-room schools. Into these schools, each six weeks, go the cadets. These student-teachers live in the country and teach there under the direction of the local teacher and the rural supervisor.

But of what import is this to the teachers college library?

Have you visited a progressive rural school lately? If you have, you know that the one-text, fixed-grade type of school is disappearing. Today, you may find John of the eighth grade, Mary of the sixth, James of the fifth, and even, fourth-grade Jean, all working together on a common subject of study such as the importance of rubber in modern warfare. Nor is fourteen-year-old Bill ashamed to recognize the fact that he cannot read and to work

at the first-grade fundamentals of reading. The concern of the modern school is enriched classroom teaching and interested, mentally-growing children.

But such study, we all know, cannot be accomplished without many good books, pamphlets, clippings, pictures, and other kinds of illustrative materials.

Our library staff believes that we have a special responsibility in seeing that these schools, affiliated with the college, have such reference materials. We believe that our rural student-teachers not only need these materials for effective student teaching but that the future teachers will *here*, in the school, *learn best* to use and get the habit of using library materials in building up, with their pupils, a vital type of classroom study.

Our cadets have studied children's literature; they have had the brief fundamentals of library organization, such as mending, classification, book use, and appreciation. We believe that, in the affiliated rural school, the teachers college library finds an excellent opportunity to prove that it all actually pays and "works."

The Library in the School

But, first of all, there is the overhauling of the library already in the school. The "library" has been built up over a period of years with the assistance of state library aid. (In Minnesota the state encourages, through this aid, the purchase of books for

the school library.) The books are to be selected from approved lists. A public, school, or county library may assume the purchase of such books for these school libraries. However, we feel that no matter what supplementary service is rendered by other library agencies, a small collection of live, factual books must always be at hand. For who knows what will be needed when the progressive class goes to work! Moreover, some other rural school may already have drawn out their required references from the central collection.

These local libraries, however, are often just a hodgepodge of soiled, worn-out, small-type books of ancient date. You have seen them. They are frequently housed in an unattractive and even windowless closet and shelved around the upper portion of the room, so that a step-ladder must be used by the children to reach the books. Usually, the really good titles are lost in such a collection or have already been worn out with constant use. "Our library," remarks the school clerk, pointing to this uninteresting mass. *No group* of pupils and teachers can be convinced that their library or any other library is, or can be, an effective classroom aid when such a condition exists. Weeding, mending, attractive rebinding, and a simple plan of classification and charging, are first essentials. (Minnesota uses the classification outline of the *Wilson Children's Catalog*.)

The plan or reorganization has not been the same in all the affiliated rural schools. But in all of them the teachers college library has had an indirect or direct part, especially in connection with the discarding and the suggestion of desirable new titles.

In one of the schools much of the work was done by the college students as a part

of their laboratory work in the summer teacher-librarian courses. The W.P.A. assisted with the difficult mending.

The "New" Library

The "new" library was exhibited and its value demonstrated in an "evening at home" put on by the children, cadet teachers, local teacher, and the rural supervisor. The entertainment concluded with cocoa, served in tin cups, and cookies. Great was the pride of the children, parents, and school board when pictures of the event appeared in the St. Cloud daily paper the next day.

In another school, under the direction of teachers and rural supervisor, the pupils themselves literally created out of a cluttered catch-all room and its contents an exceedingly attractive and effective library. Cleaning, painting library furniture, classification, book charging, publicity, all were parts of this library project which culminated in a book describing the whole matter, dedicated to the teacher.

These projects have proved conclusively that a small, local, attractive, and vital group of library books does create an *interest in* and a *consciousness of* libraries. These children and teachers *do consider* their libraries an integral part of their learning and leisure time equipment.

Book loans are a *second* service to these affiliated rural schools. Some loans are references to supplement the classroom study. These are chosen from the juvenile section of the college library, preferably by the student teachers before they leave for the country, or by the local rural school teacher or rural supervisor. Often the library staff assists. The rural supervisor, as an intelligent and enthusiastic user of books and libraries, plans next year to stress the use of indexes to library

materials: the Wilson *Children's Catalog*, the Rue indexes, the Office of Education "500" list, etc. The pupils will be encouraged to find references for their study through the *Children's Catalog*. (There is one in each school.)

Most of the schools need recreational books. These we are especially pleased to loan so that there will be a constant influx of new titles and so that the book purchase money of the school will be saved for the necessary local library of factual materials.

One of the groups in the schools has been especially pleased to borrow from the college collection picture books made of inexpensive brown Bessemer Bristol from worn-out picture books by the W.P.A. and the N.Y.A. workers.

Do you get discouraged when you view those easy reading books—soiled, torn, unfit for circulation? The children of the schools are now making their own picture books and easy reading books, patterned after those loaned by the college library. Booklets are also made from other types of discards.

Visual Materials

No elementary teaching program is complete nowadays without visual materials. We loan pictures to the schools but an additional service has been the purchase, for the rural department, of sets of pictures which illustrate special units of work. A sample set is on "Transportation" and is part of the Visualized Curriculum series.¹ The Building America series published by the Society for Curriculum Study is another excellent series. These pictures are good and really well worth the investment since they will save the time of search of teachers and librarians and provide just

¹ Published by the Creative Education Society, Mankato, Minn. There are also helpful manuals to use with these sets of pictures.

the right illustration for the important business of teaching.

This service does not mean, however, that the school neglects to build up its own file of pictures. "Any picture may be useful" is the slogan. The rural supervisor was illustrating fertilization of plants the other day in a demonstration lesson. She had a colored picture of a humming bird alighting on a flower. Afterwards, in answer to the inquiry as to source, she said, "Sunday Supplement."

Some of you may be asking, "What about the state, county, or public library contract service to these schools?"

Yes, books may be borrowed from the state library division. A county library service is being initiated in one of the counties of which we are a part, and excellent public library contract service is available.

But this is also a fact. There are over four hundred rural schools in the three counties about us. It seems, therefore, that our affiliated schools should seek library assistance from the teachers college rather than from these other overworked agencies. Moreover, as noted previously, we feel that rural student teachers should have as much attention from the library as do the campus-school cadets.

Join Classroom Activities

And finally, as part of our service to the affiliated rural schools, we of the library staff sit in on the classroom activities. Our cataloger is learning, with the students in an education class, how to construct a unit of work. And I plan, next week to visit our summer rural demonstration school. What we are learning! Just try it. The teacher will even be pleased! The time and means of travel? Ride out with the rural super-

visor and turn some local task over to someone else. It really pays. Perhaps the teacher will sit in on library activities some day. We have much to learn from each other's techniques.

I have described at some length our service to the affiliated rural schools because it is in this field that we have had more experience and believe service most necessary. And yet there are two other areas in which I believe we will come to have an increasing responsibility for service. Let me touch briefly on these.

We know that we can be an important factor in the in-service learning of our alumni. When books are needed, therefore, especially for study, we loan them, provided such books are not in demand at the college and that a deposit is made until the books are returned.

Aid to Former Students

We wish we might prepare annotated lists of recent educational books and send these out to our former students. Perhaps some of you will tell us about your experience in this field later on. Do not our college presidents feel, at this time, that it is most necessary to do what we can to assist our graduates in the improvement of their teaching techniques? And would not this be one method of approach to this problem?

And that third group—teachers in the same city and the surrounding area, including the rural teachers? Is there not a possibility of service to these teachers? Can we not at least open our doors for reference use of periodicals, collections of children's literature, elementary and secondary sections of the library, for survey and study of educational titles, pamphlets, and visual materials? These teachers would be free to come to the library in

the evenings and on Saturdays.

When might and intolerance are struggling for dominance in our present and future worlds, should not we librarians in the teachers colleges encourage these teachers to further study and constructive thinking by sharing our resources with them? Through what better agency can we work in fighting the present-day forces of evil?

For the rural teachers we may well advise and assist, if necessary, with the provision of a professional library in the county superintendent's office or in the county library collection. Down in West Virginia a teachers college librarian is successfully putting through such a service in her area. Other librarians, no doubt, are pioneering in such professional provision in their parts of the country. Library indexes such as the Wilson's children's and high school catalogs should most certainly be made available to rural teachers in these collections if individual copies are not possible in each school.

The Curriculum Laboratory

There is another important service to in-service teachers which, in many teachers college libraries, is still in the initial stage. This is the establishment of a curriculum laboratory and the inviting of teachers to make use of its resources. In what better fashion may our school administrators and teachers be made aware of changing teaching methods, of new and better school texts and supplementary materials? These collections of sample texts and workbooks—gifts from the publishers—curricula, units of work, visual and other teaching aids, can be made vital tools of in-service teacher training as well as aids of instruction for teachers-in-the-making.

We all have much to learn about this

assistance to teachers. There are outstanding curriculum laboratories in all parts of this country. And studies are being made of such service. Let us become conscious of these workshops and, as soon as we get them well-established in our teachers college libraries, let us widen

their usefulness by extending their service to teachers about us.

Rural schools, alumni, teachers of our area—three important groups—all, we believe, merit our attention. But how far shall we go? That's the question we must answer.

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finally through the tunnel to West Hall where "tea" was served by book characters.

An entire year is none too long in which to get ready for this annual event. Libraries must be built up and put into shape. That means there must be money raised to help buy books and lists, and books must be perused from which to make the selection for purchase. And, to be sure, once the purchase is made, the books must be properly cared for. The college librarian or her helpers have frequent calls to the various schools to counsel with the young librarians or to have secret conferences regarding program parts. These parts are, likewise, in process all through the year. Two schools have written book plays and designed and made their own settings and costumes. All the schools have school

papers which will be a part of the display this coming fall. And as to the history of books and homemade examples from the earliest wax tablets and parchment (home-processed) to a beautifully bound book of the present day, it is probable that the college students viewing the exhibit know less than do these rural school pupils.

Other than these services outside the boundary of the college campus there are the usual college library services to alumni and services through the office of inter-library loans. These are more or less taken for granted. It is the two services regarding which I have spoken that help to define, as we see it, the service area of a college library, which area finally extends to whatever peoples and places having a contact with the college.