
Library services to the academically disadvantaged in the public community college: A draft

Prepared by the CJCLS Committee on Services to the Disadvantaged
Madison Mosley, Chair

The role of the library in educating basic skills students.

This draft position paper is a product of the ACRL Community and Junior College Libraries Section's Committee on Services to the Disadvantaged. This paper addresses the role of the library in serving this segment of the community college student population.

Work began on this position paper in 1984 under the able direction of Cay Thomas (Florida Community College at Jacksonville). Committee members included Rosa Babcock (El Centro College), Mildred Kirsner (Miami-Dade), Susan Maltese (Oakton Community College), Luis Chaparro (El Paso Community College), and Madison Mosley (South Florida Community College).

An open hearing on this draft will be held during the 1987 Annual ALA Conference in San Francisco. Section members and other interested ACRL members are invited to share written comments beforehand with the current chair of the Services to the Disadvantaged Committee: Madison Mosley, Director of the Library, South Florida Community College, 600 West College Drive, Avon Park, Florida 33825.

Introduction

The public community college is the initial point of entry into higher education for over half of today's college students. With its commitment to an

open access policy, the community college serves a large contingent of students who are academically unprepared for the exacting demands of college.

After acknowledging the litany of names by which these students are known, Cross defines as "basic skills students"

... these students [who] are severely limited in life choices because they lack the basic skills essential for lifelong learning. In an earlier era they might not have graduated from high school and almost certainly would not have gone on to college.¹

To prevent the open door from becoming a revolving door, many community colleges have instituted basic skills programs to provide support services for these students.² The purpose of these programs is "to develop students' basic skills to a level from which they can enter regular college curriculum

¹K. Patricia Cross, "The Impact of Changing Student Populations on Community Colleges," *Community College Review* 10 (Spring 1983):31.

²Lee Noel and Randi Levitz, eds., *How to Succeed with Academically Underprepared Students: A Catalog of Successful Practices* (Iowa City: American College Testing Program, National Center for the Advancement of Educational Practices, 1982).

programs."³

The library provides services to support all aspects of the college's program. However, these services are primarily directed toward the traditional college student. Since

. . . many high-risk students at entry level are simply not verbal learners and they are incapable of acquiring knowledge by routine listening or reading⁴

it appears that customary library services are not meeting the educational needs of basic skills students. Rippey and Truett's study lends support to this contention. What, then, should be the role of the library in the education of these students?

It is the position of this committee that librarians must take an active role in the education process which will bring basic skills students up to appropriate levels. Two separate assessments of basic skills programs^{5,6} indicate that a significant aspect of successful programs is their high degree of individualization. Grant and Hoerber assert that

Not only must programs be individually tailored from campus to campus, but they must be also uniquely modified; designed from student to student.⁷

Library services to these students should also be as individualized as possible and designed to reinforce verbal and written skills acquired in basic skills programs. One-on-one interaction has long been the hallmark of truly good reader service, and this mark of excellence should be continued. In addition, attention to the unique needs of basic skills students in the following areas of staff development, collection development, programs, services and visual accessibility will help to eliminate some of the barriers that can prevent learning.

Staff development

Professional and support staff should be given opportunities to participate in continuing education workshops to enhance services to basic skills students. Workshops which focus on personal interaction with ethnic, foreign or disadvantaged populations will help generate awareness of cultural differences, if it is determined that such an awareness is lacking. Public service librarians should be encouraged to serve as mentors or faculty advisors, where such programs exist, to students

who have been identified as "high-risk." If such programs have not been developed, the possibility of initiating them should be examined. The teaching component of library service should be emphasized. Reference and bibliographic instruction librarians should be encouraged to view their roles as equally important as the classroom instructor in the teaching and learning process.

Collection development

Liaison with the basic skills faculty must be firmly established at the administrative level in order to facilitate a cooperative venture at the teaching and learning level. A portion of the materials budget should be allocated to the basic skills area, and the library and basic skills faculty should work together to select materials. These materials should be integrated into the regular collection, rather than housed separately from the library. Programmed or self-instructional items and audiovisual titles on the more difficult concepts in the content areas should be considered to supplement the basic collection. If learning labs are administered by or located in the library, the personnel who teach in these labs should be included in collection development activities.

Programs and services

The library is a major classroom in which students learn. Librarians should be actively involved with basic skills faculty in preparing programs, library exercises and bibliographies for these students. Bibliographic instruction should be adapted to include a variety of teaching methods to meet the needs of these students. Rippey and Truett report that

Numerous other groups appeared much more likely to be singled out for special library services than the disadvantaged . . . such groups as nursing students and those in communications, horology, jewelry-making, criminal justice, technical writing, and health careers programs were offered special library instruction or orientation while almost two-thirds of the colleges surveyed did not provide such instruction to developmental students.⁸

Yet studies indicate that "academic achievement of . . . high-risk students increased significantly where library instruction was integrated with the teaching of developmental English courses."⁹ Regular and frequent exchange of information between librarians and basic skills faculty and joint ventures into special programs and services need to be explored.

⁸Donald I. Rippey and Carol Truett, "The Developmental Student and the Community College Library," *Community College Review* 11 (Winter 1983-84):41-47.

⁹*Ibid.*, 42.

³John E. Rouche and R. Wade Kirk, *Catching Up: Remedial Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973), 6.

⁴*Ibid.*, 66.

⁵John E. Rouche and Jerry J. Snow, *Overcoming Learning Problems* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978).

⁶Mary K. Grant and Daniel R. Hoerber, *Basic Skills Programs: Are They Working?* AAHE-ERIC Higher Education Research Report, 1978-1 (Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education, 1978).

⁷*Ibid.*, 16.

Visual accessibility

Periodic profiling of patrons helps in reconsidering what assistance some users need to understand the library and its services. It is important to determine the number and ages of basic skills students in the student body, the number for whom English is not the native language, the percentage of increase of basic skills students yearly and the number in particular programs with special needs. Review the location of and terminology used on library signs for clarity, consistency and use of non-technical terms. Consider using staff name tags or name signs on the reference desk to identify library staff.

As with signs, the headings and wordings of library handouts and guidebooks should be as clear as possible. "Bibliography" or "Pathfinder" may be less clear than "Study guide" or "Research guide." Consider modifying terms you want to introduce, such as "Reference books—for in-library use" or "Subject headings—topics under which books are

listed in the catalog."

Students should be able to identify where help is available upon entering the library. An information desk should be placed where staff can monitor use of materials and offer assistance to those having difficulty but reluctant to ask for help. Consider ways of placing book ranges to enable staff to offer help to those who are searching.

Ask users for suggestions. Display a suggestion box prominently and mention it during instruction classes to encourage its use.

Conclusion

Basic skills students will not automatically avail themselves of library services. It is incumbent upon librarians to identify and address the needs of these students who make up a larger percentage of the student body every year. Effective service to this population can be achieved only through cooperation between basic skills faculty and librarians, supported at the administrative level. ■■

University librarians discuss reorganization

Reorganization of academic libraries was the topic of the ACRL University Libraries Section's Current Topics Discussion Group meeting at ALA Midwinter in January. Three featured speakers discussed different aspects of changing organizational structures in academic libraries: Joanne Euster, university librarian, Rutgers University; Jordan Scepanski, director, Library and Learning Resources, California State University, Long Beach; and Charling Fagan, assistant director of social sciences, Columbia University Libraries. Janice Koyama, chair of the Current Topics Discussion Group, served as moderator. The meeting was attended by more than 100 people.

Joanne Euster set the scene with a presentation entitled, "New Technology, New Attitudes, New Organizations." In comparing overall trends between 1973 and 1986, Euster found very few radical organization charts. Most charts are similar in showing the reporting structure, flow of communication, and the relationships of various library departments and their size. Some of the purposes served by an organizational structure include optimizing work efficiency, facilitating decision-making, and maximizing human potential. Reasons for change in the structure might include the increasing complexity of library processes, the technological imperative, and changes in human expectations—the expectations of library users as well as library staff. An organizational chart shows structure, but it also shows how the library views itself. Changes in the organizational paradigm happen gradually and tend to appear at the unit

level long before they show up in the organizational chart.

The next speaker, Jordan Scepanski, described the matrix structure now in place at the Library and Learning Resources, California State University, Long Beach. Reorganization began in Spring 1985 when the library began moving away from functional specialization among the librarians. Scepanski, as director, was interested in loosening up the organization in order to allow time for scholarly activities related to achieving promotion and tenure and for greater creativity. Supervisory responsibilities for librarians were de-emphasized. The librarians are organized into four subject groups: Business Administration and Management, Humanities and Fine Arts, Science and Technology, and Social Sciences. Within these four groups the goal is for all librarians to perform both technical and public services functions. Scepanski has modeled this structure after the faculty departments. Performance evaluations are done in line with the faculty model, at the appropriate times for promotion and tenure decisions. A post-tenure review is conducted at five-year intervals. In answer to a question about the library support staff, Scepanski said that he felt the changes mainly affected the librarians and that the support staff did not see their role as having changed substantially. New management positions have been created and filled by non-librarians, however, including one as head of the traditional technical services operations.

The third speaker, Charling Fagan, reported on

the recent merger of the Computer Center with the Libraries at Columbia University in a presentation entitled, "The Impact of Reorganization on Job Responsibilities and Library Structures." Although the new reporting structure occurred in February 1986, the possibility had been discussed at the University as early as 1984. The new department is called the Scholarly Information Center, and its organization chart shows the Computer Center reporting to the library director. Under this reorganization, Computer User Services has been merged

with Library Public Services. Fagan discussed the effect on the library structure, the funding base, and the library staff of this fundamental change. The full impact of the reorganization is still being realized.

After the formal presentations, the rest of the time was devoted to questions of the speakers about various points and to discussion of some of the issues that had been raised.—*Paula Walker, Odegaard Undergraduate Library, University of Washington.* ■■

The mission of a university undergraduate library: Draft model statement

Prepared by the ACRL Undergraduate Librarians Discussion Group

Wilma Reid Cipolla, Chair

A proposed revision to the 1979 Model Statement.

The purpose of the undergraduate library is to take primary responsibility for meeting the library needs of undergraduate students in a large university environment. The designation of a separate library expressly for undergraduates is based on the premise that undergraduates deserve a full and fair share of the libraries' resources—materials, services, and staff time. The policies of the separate undergraduate library may frequently give preferential treatment to undergraduates to ensure this allocation of resources. The nature of the environment, the specific needs of undergraduates, and the kinds of staff and services required to effectively meet those needs are more fully described in the following paragraphs.

Environment

The library systems of large universities generally consist of several major departmental libraries plus numerous special libraries and reading rooms spread over a large campus area. The materials collection of the library system is measured in millions of volumes. Each library within the system concentrates on the needs of the members of a specific department or field of study, and the quality of the library is defined in terms of the strengths of the research collection. Specialized services are often provided for those doing research, such as computerized searching of commercial resource databases. The staff members of those libraries are selected for their ability to provide graduate-level reference