

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE LIBRARY IN THE UNITED STATES

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The Community College

As a preliminary to our discussion of the community college library we shall give a brief sketch of the community college itself. The community college is a typically American institution. Until about two decades ago these two-year post-secondary institutions were called junior colleges, regardless of whether they were publicly or privately supported. More recently "community college" has become the customary designation for the publicly supported schools. One of the principal causes for the establishment of junior colleges was the conviction that it would be preferable to divide college education into two distinct units, the first unit to include the first two years of college work, and the second to include the second two years. This view was held mostly by American professors and educational administrators who had studied in Germany around the latter part of the last century. William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago during that period was one of the leading advocates of this view. In Germany university study was largely graduate in character, roughly comparable to the specialized and advanced aspects of our upper division colleges and our graduate schools.

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Main Functions of the Community College

For many years the junior college offered only the kind of courses also available in the first two-year sequence of a four-year college or university. Gradually, however, the range of junior college offerings was extended, especially in publicly supported two-year institutions. It was felt that the public junior college had the obligation to provide any kind of post-secondary education helpful to the members of the community in which the college was located. For this reason "community college" became the preferred designation for the public two-year college.

Today most of the literature notes six main functions performed by the publicly supported two-year college. In addition to the traditional function of preparing students for advanced studies, there are these other areas of concern: career education, developmental education, general education, guidance, and community service.¹

Career education has become an especially important phase of community college work. Advances in technology have made it necessary for many people to obtain academic preparation beyond the high school level. Affected are both young persons entering the labor market and those already in the work force who need retraining for present and future employment. Most community colleges responded to these needs by offering a wide variety of vocational curricula. It is not unusual for a college to cover 30 to 50 vocational-technical fields and sub-fields.

Developmental education has been designed to bring students inadequately prepared for college work to a niveau at which they can deal with college level courses. Since most public two-year colleges are open-door colleges they usually permit anyone over 18 years of age to enroll. It is evident that among this group a considerable number have gaps in their pre-college education which must be filled.

Two-year colleges also offer general education, which may be briefly characterized as a body of course experiences which help the individual orient himself in society. These courses,

while not specifically designed for relevance to a job situation may incidentally prove quite useful in this area.

Guidance is of utmost importance, considering that many of the students embarking upon college work are not well informed regarding the many directions college study may take; nor are students always able to assess their own potential for specific careers.

Community service is an important function of the public two-year college. The college faculty represents a pool of resource persons on whom the town, city or county may draw for expert advice and counsel. For instance, a city may wish to evaluate its current accounting system and it may obtain the services of a faculty member to present alternative solutions to the system currently being followed.

Growth of the Community College

The first public two-year college was established in Peoria, Illinois in 1901. During the next several decades the increase in their number was slow. However during the past twenty years or so their growth has accelerated rapidly, in fact more rapidly than that of any other type of institution of higher learning. By 1970 there were about 1000 post-secondary two-year institutions, about two thirds of them public and the remainder private. It should be noted that during the last decade private junior colleges have declined in number while publicly supported two-year colleges have more than doubled.² It may be anticipated that public two-year colleges will further increase in number. In fact, a special report of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education envisions that by the year 2000, 40 to 45 percent of all undergraduates will be enrolled in community colleges.³ As already stressed, the character of a college's library service is largely determined by the goals and objectives of the college itself. It is evident that library service for a college which offers only a curriculum parallel to the first two years of a four-year college must be different from library service designed for a community college offering a wide range of curricula.

The Library (Learning Resource Center) Standards and Guidelines

Librarians, educational administrators and others who wish to assess the condition of libraries need standards and guidelines. There is a distinction: guidelines are broad and general, and present a suggested level of performance. Standards are more specific; they refer to accepted definitions, and often give formulas and rules which can be applied to a particular evaluation.

After extended and intensive preliminary work, Standards for Junior College Libraries were adopted in 1960 by the Association of College and Research Libraries, a Division of the ALA.⁴ These Standards remained in force until 1972 when they were replaced by the Guidelines for Two-Year College Learning Resources Programs.⁵ (An earlier version of the Guidelines was entitled AAJC-ACRL Guidelines for Two-Year College Library Learning Resource Centers). The differences between the 1960 Standards and the 1972 Guidelines are pronounced. The 1960 Standards refer to junior college libraries, and were approved by just one professional association, the Association of College and Research Libraries. The 1972 Guidelines were approved by three professional associations: the American Library Association (ACRL), the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, and the Association of Educational Communications and Technology. Moreover as part of its title, the 1972 document contains the broad term "learning resources" rather than the more narrow term "library." The 1972 Guidelines deal with the learning resources of the college regardless of whether they are located in the learning resource center or in some other area of the college. There is another basic difference between the 1960 Standards and the 1972 Guidelines. The 1960 Standards are quantitative and qualitative. The 1972 Guidelines are qualitative only. They offer "criteria for information, self study, and planning."⁶

A further comparison between the 1960 and 1972 documents shows that the changes which have occurred in practice are

reflected in the Guidelines. By using the term "learning resources" the 1972 document recognizes that the responsibilities of many two-year college libraries have been broadened. Most community college libraries are now responsible not only for books, but also for many or most of the other resources for learning. This broadening of the libraries' scope has been a gradual process. Quite often in the past when new kinds of resources became known and available, an interested instructor obtained them and held them in his office. When the types and quantities of resources increased to the point of becoming burdensome for an individual instructor to handle them an audio-visual center was often created to administer films, filmstrips and other nonbook media. In some instances the librarian was prepared to assume responsibility for nonbook media and they became part of the library's resources.

It was more and more recognized that book and nonbook media are best administered in a coordinated and unified fashion. The 1972 Guidelines favor this arrangement. They note that "the evolution of libraries away from their traditional function as repositories for books has been parallel to the evolution of audio-visual centers away from their traditional function as agencies for showing of films. There has been a confluence of accelerated development in both areas which is inextricably interwoven in the technological development in education."⁷ In many institutions the name of the agency with the broad responsibility for all or most learning resources of the college has been changed to learning resource center, learning materials center, or to some other name that shows the agency to be responsible both for books and nonbook media. Parenthetically it may be noted that some libraries have preferred to retain the designation "library" even though their responsibilities have become as extensive as others renamed learning resource centers.

Materials

As previously stressed the LRC (Learning Resource Center) is characterized by its assumption of responsibility for a wide variety of resource materials. The LRC has holdings of books

and periodicals, it administers nonbook media of various kinds as well. LRC learning resource materials should include many subject fields and a broad range of subject treatment to meet the needs of a non-homogeneous clientele. General college type materials are needed for the student who plans to undertake further studies at a senior college after having completed his work in the two-year institution. Material of a vocational-technical nature should be supplied for the student who is pursuing work on the technician level. The LRC should provide general cultural learning resources for the students who attend college primarily for cultural enrichment. The LRC must also be stocked with developmental resources - some below college level - for the student who has not yet reached the point at which he can follow general college work. The student needs also to be richly provided with guidance materials which can help him identify procedures and channels leading to a career in line with his inclinations and abilities.

It was indicated earlier that the community college curriculum ought to be geared to local needs. This consideration has great bearing on the materials selection policy. For instance, if an institution offers a hotel and management curriculum it must assemble special resources in that area. If a school has a teaching program for pollution abatement it should build up a special collection for this field. Many examples could be cited of LRCs that have formed such special collections. It should also be mentioned that LRCs often acquire books, documents, and other resources related to the surrounding community. In some instances the interest extends to include items pertaining to the state or region in which the college is located.

Periodicals

There is very wide variety in the size of LRC periodical collections. In some large institutions, collections may exceed 1000 subscriptions; in medium-size or small institutions they may range anywhere from around 100 to 400. According to U. S. Office of Education statistics the median size of the periodical collections is about 300.⁸

A very large number of LRCs do not retain the original issues indefinitely. There is great variation among the colleges. Most LRCs retain the original files for not less than two years. An institution may have different retention policies for heavily used and rarely used items, keeping the originals of the heavily used items for longer periods.

Periodicals in Microform

The practice has become widespread to subscribe also to microform editions of magazines deemed of longterm value by the college. As a rule the microforms are retained permanently. In the case of periodicals which are considered very important for retrospective work, earlier runs are sometimes ordered.

Other Items in Microform

A number of LRCs subscribe to the microform editions of nationally and internationally important newspapers such as the *New York Times*. Occasionally a microform subscription is placed for a paper of regional importance. It should be mentioned that several LRCs have enlarged their holdings of monographs and historically important documents by the acquisition of whole collections in microform from Library Resources, Inc., an Encyclopedia Britannica Company. The collections are titled *The Library of American Civilization* and *The Library of English Literature*. Both sets are issued in complete form and as core collections. The core collections are smaller and are especially geared to the requirements of community colleges; they are of course, less expensive than the complete collections. The complete set of *The Library of American Civilization* includes some 20,000 items and the core collection about 12,000. The corresponding figures for *The Library of English Literature* are around 10,000 and 2,700 volumes respectively.

Size of the Collection

The 1960 Standards in force until the 1972 Guidelines were

adopted prescribed 20,000 volumes as the minimum number for an institution with an enrollment of 1,000 students, and increments of 5,000 volumes for each additional 500 students.⁹ By the early 1960s only a small number of institutions had acquired collections corresponding to the 1960 Standards.¹⁰ The percentage of community colleges which reached the 20,000 volumes mark has increased steadily; by 1970-71 over 60 per cent of community college LRCs had collections of over 20,000.¹¹ It should be noted that there are more large community colleges today than a decade ago. In a larger college the LRC must cover more fields since the course offerings are usually more extensive. Moreover, there is need for more duplication of materials if many students have to draw on the same titles. The future growth of LRC collections will be influenced by changes in the size of the student body and/or by the kind of curricula offered. It will also be influenced by the extent to which nonbook media are acquired. Heavy acquisition of non-book media may slow down the acquisition of books, at least in certain areas.

Impact of Individualized Instruction

An increasing number of community colleges are stressing individualized instruction. This educational policy is having a great impact on learning resources programs. A broad variety of resources must be available so that a student may find those best suited to his ability, background and preferences.

Local Production

Learning materials which fit special local requirements cannot always be obtained through commercial channels. Therefore many community colleges have set up production facilities which allow the creation of materials tailored to local needs.

Order Procedure

Today LRCs can order books and other learning materials

whenever the need for them arises. This had not always been the case, especially at institutions which were part of the common school system. Many LRCs had to limit their ordering to one or several definite periods within the academic year.

Classification Systems

Until a decade ago nearly all post-secondary two-year institutions, public and private, used the Dewey classification. A study published in 1963 indicates that about 96 percent of all libraries employed the Dewey scheme for the cataloging of books.¹² Along with other kinds of academic libraries, many LRCs have changed from the Dewey scheme to the Library of Congress classification, and the majority of the community colleges established in the late sixties and after adopted the LC scheme from the outset. By 1974 the LC classification has become more widely used than Dewey.

The Staff

As is usual in American libraries, the LRC staff consists of three principal categories: professional, non-professional, and students. Until recent years most libraries dealt largely with books and other graphic media. It was therefore expected that prospective professional staff members receive their training in graduate library schools. As the scope of LRCs was broadened and as they began to add many nonbook media, it became apparent that for some positions backgrounds are required which are not usually provided by library schools. A modern LRC may, for instance, need a computer expert, who would usually have secured his training in a mathematics or physics department rather than in a library school. The 1972 Guidelines recognize this need for staff with many types of background and experience by stating that "professional staff members should have degrees and/or experience appropriate to the position requirements..."¹³ So far most of the LRC directors and other professional staff members have been trained in library schools. It is to be expected that the majority will continue to

receive their training in library schools, but that a larger contingent than in the past will be equipped with specialized training acquired outside the graduate library school.

Non-Professional Staff, also Called Supportive

It has long been emphasized that professional staff members should be freed from routine tasks that can well be performed by persons without graduate training. There is no generally accepted formula for the ratio of non-professional to professional. However it has been widely recommended that a college should employ at least two non-professional staff members for each professional person. These are average figures applicable to complete staffs. Within an LRC requirements differ from department to department. Usually a technical services department can absorb a higher percentage of non-professional employees than a reference department. Just as a variety of talents and skills is needed on the professional level, supportive staff must also be diverse in training and background. In each instance the number and kind of "supportive staff needed will be determined by the size of the college and the services rendered."¹⁴ Supportive staff will be required for such traditional library activities as cataloging and circulation, and also for handling and servicing of equipment, for showing films, and for many other tasks connected with the utilization of nonbook media.

Library Technical Assistants

In recent years a new staff category, that of Library Technical Assistant or Library Technician has been developed. The Library Technical Assistant stands between the professional and the purely clerical categories. The professional staff member must know the theoretical bases of his profession, and the intricate relationships between its various components. He must be able to plan and establish policies. The LTA (Library Technical Assistant) also must have a good knowledge of the library field. In the LTA's case however, emphasis is placed

on practical applications, and he is usually expected to be thoroughly familiar with a particular area. The LTA is differentiated from the clerical staff in that the clerk is more closely supervised, often by an LTA. The clerk usually handles routine tasks and work which is repetitive in nature.

It should be noted that "Library Technical Assistant" or "Library Technician" indicates the employee's classification level; it does not mean such an employee is limited to working in technical service departments. LTAs may be assigned to any LRC department and to various kinds of work: technical services, public services, work with books or nonbooks. In some institutions the term Media Technician rather than Library Technician is used for staff members who work with nonbook media. The use of this term is not uniform; some institutions and some writers treat it as synonymous with Library Technician.

Since graduate library schools with very few exceptions train only future professional library and LRC staff members, another agency had to be found for the training of LTAs. It was logical for community colleges to perform this function, since they are the principal institutions for the training of technicians for most of the other occupational areas. As noted earlier, it is not unusual for a community college to offer technician curricula in 30 to 50 fields and subfields. In library technician programs the director of the LRC often plays an important role. The establishment of an LTA program is often due to his initiative. Frequently the director teaches in the program. There are a number of instances where the director of the LRC heads the LTA teaching program. This arrangement should be only temporary. The director of an LRC cannot usually assume this additional responsibility on a permanent basis, especially if an LTA program is intensive and heavily attended.

Student Assistants

These aides play an important part in staffing the LRC. They perform a wide variety of tasks in accordance with their backgrounds, their skills, and above all, the needs of the

institution. Student aides should not be viewed as substitutes for full-time staff but rather as assistants who facilitate the work of the regular staff. Employment of student assistants is desirable not only for the help they can give the LRC, but because they have the opportunity for a positive experience of library work and may be encouraged to decide on librarianship as a career.

The Future

The community college, a relatively young institution, is free to be innovative. We find many instances in which new educational theories have been introduced and tested. Educational experimentation has often entailed the use of newer media, and generally this has led to an expanded role for the LRC. It is expected that this trend will continue. The 1972 Guidelines anticipate that even more expansion of resources and services will be needed, and that therefore "all concerned should be alert to the coming challenge."¹⁵

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