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THE LIBRARY AND COLLEGE INSTRUCTION

A DISCUSSION of the college or university library at a meeting of college administrators is always pertinent. The library represents the college community at study, whereas the classroom stands for instruction, and it must be admitted that of the two, study is the more important. The college library also is, potentially, the great academic equalizer. A college which may not be able to boast of a distinguished faculty such as can be found in the great centers of learning, nevertheless can possess in its library the thought and work of these great scientists and scholars. More important, the library, if well selected, can contain the best thought of all preceding generations of scholars and scientists, to whose insight and wisdom the contemporary generation adds only a tiny increment. But while the library is thus always a proper subject of discussion, it is fair to ask why suddenly in the last year or two so much attention has been given to this subject, and whether the Executive Committee of this organization is justified in asking you, while in the midst of other problems, to listen to another paper on the subject. The reply rests on three points:

(1) The first is a rather disquieting fact. During the past two or three decades college libraries have been duplicated, trebled or quadrupled in size. Rejoicings over this fact are proper and find all of us among the celebrants. But as these collections of books have grown in size, they have become more and more complex. The larger the library gets, the more difficult it is for students to

use it, and the more inevitably it seems to be hedged and bound by various restrictions unnecessary in the informal days of the library's care-free and happy youth. In my own library at Duke we have had in the last few years an annual library dinner with a distinguished writer as guest speaker on each occasion. Without exception each one of these speakers has gone out of his way to deprecate the disappearance of this freedom of use in connection with the great modern collections, and to turn our attention back to the happy, untrammelled hours which he spent in the alcoves of some little library in his undergraduate days. Due to the increase in the size and value of college libraries, and also to the increase of student enrolment; due also, I think, to some unhappy influence from the public libraries, it seems true to say that the larger, and therefore presumably the better the library, the more unusable it becomes, at least for college undergraduates. That is certainly not a happy result of all our spending and effort.

(2) The second factor which has brought this subject into the center of interest is the increasing responsibility thrown upon the library in connection with the development of the newer technics of instruction. Twenty-five years ago, when college teaching was largely done by class discussion, textbooks, and the uniform reading by the entire class of a few chosen volumes, the library problem was simply one of providing in sufficient numbers these latter volumes. The library problem was solved by means of reserve book shelves. The greater portion of the book collection was housed in stacks, which were not designed with the expectation of extensive use. The deficiencies of this method of instruction have been rather completely revealed, at least as regards the last two years of college work.

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If education means awakening rather than imparting facts, and if the characteristics of an educated individual are inquisitiveness, independence of thought and intellectual initiative, it is apparent that something else is needed than passive classroom acceptance and uncritical repetition. Hence, there have been developed various methods which throw an increasing responsibility upon the individual student—honors courses, reading periods, and tutorial plans of one sort or another. But this increased freedom means that teaching is transferred from the classroom where it is direct, to the library where it is done indirectly. Thus the book collection emerges more clearly than formerly as an instructional tool of the first importance and it is highly desirable to consider what changes this may involve in its administration, its place in the college organization, and its financial support.

(3) The third factor which is being realized more and more clearly, is the unfortunate gap which exists, in most instances, between the faculty and the college library staff. The first college librarians were college teachers who carried over into the library the objectives which were theirs in the classroom. But these librarians were confronted with technical problems about which they knew virtually nothing. The problems of cataloging, classification and the like called for knowledge and equipment which these first librarians did not have. Public libraries were growing at the same time and librarianship began to emerge as a profession. In the long run the colleges have turned over their libraries to professional librarians who have rendered indispensable service in the organization, preservation and servicing of the book collections. Without the work of the trained librarians, college libraries soon would have become literary quagmires. But this development has resulted in the separation of the library program from that of the rest of the college. Librarians have been held responsible for the care of the books, and profes-

sors for their use. Only in the field of recreational reading has the library profession, as a group, assumed responsibility for the use of books. In general, it thus may be said that we have on the campus two professions, both deserving of high praise: librarians and teachers, but there has been little integration of their work. Unfortunately, the student, whose work in the classroom and in the library is a continuous whole, suffers too frequently from this lack of correlation between the educational forces on the campus.

The results of this separation of function have often been described and deplored. On the one hand it has concentrated the attention of librarians on the problem of preserving books from damage and loss, and has denied to them insight into numerous ways by which the work of instruction could be facilitated by means of books. On the faculty side it has resulted in a lack of any very strong sense of responsibility for the library aspects of their students' work. From librarians one hears of reading assignments which students can accomplish with the greatest difficulty, of term papers or quizzes so organized as to produce a scarcity of books at the very moment when the instructor is insisting that they be used, of lists of books to go on reserve given so late that the library staff has no chance of getting them ready on time. From faculty members one hears of library rules which remove the books from the students rather than bring the two together and of the unwillingness of many librarians to adjust their regulations to meet special situations.

This is not the place to discuss detailed arrangements by which libraries might more effectively cooperate with the teaching staff. Thanks to the interest of the Association of American Colleges in this problem, the writer looks forward to a fuller discussion of the problems than is possible now. Such arrangements, however, will vary in any case with every local situation. It will be more useful to devote what remains of the

present discussion to certain basic principles which seem to be involved in any solution:

(1) The first principle, which must be clearly recognized by college administrators as well as by librarians and faculty members, is that *books are of value only as they are used*. We have not entirely escaped from the mediaeval attitude towards books. In a period when books could be reproduced only by hand it was obviously necessary to chain them to their cases and to guard them with the greatest care. With modern typesetting and photo-offset methods it would seem possible to regard books as teaching tools rather than as capital assets. While the factor of loss cannot be disregarded, it is certainly secondary to that of use. In any number of college libraries, however, one finds undergraduate students denied admittance to the stacks, and compelled to fill out call slips to secure books placed on reserve. In such situations the undergraduates see and handle no books except the dictionaries in the reference room, current periodicals, and possibly a few books placed on display for general reading. In these libraries the principle of preservation obviously has been given precedence over that of use. The point of view of one of the most distinguished eastern college seems sounder. In this institution the undergraduate students are freely admitted to the stacks—although there are 2,500 of them. When I asked the librarian what his losses had been, he replied that he did not wish to know, since his college felt that whatever the loss, the policy was worth it. In those instances where stack space is limited and it is felt desirable to exclude students to avoid crowding and confusion, the library would seem obligated to create some smaller collection of materials to which students could be given direct access.

(2) There is a further sharpening of this conception which needs to be insisted upon. The use of the library which is of primary importance is that in connection with courses of instruction. This would seem

obvious, since it is for these courses of instruction that students come to college. Recreational reading is relatively less important, in fact, on a college campus where the day's work consists largely of reading, it would seem to be of less importance than in other conditions of life. The principle, however, does seem not to have been clearly perceived. College administrators have in many instances given considerable attention to the task of creating browsing rooms in which general reading unconnected with courses of instruction could be done with great freedom. One would expect such attention to have been given first to reading related to courses of study. In the case of librarians this interest in general reading rather than in curricular reading is due, as remarked above, to basic causes. This fall I have visited a number of college libraries. I have seen many displays of books, by which librarians hoped to secure voluntary student reading. They have all been of general or recreational character. I have not observed any displays of material related to courses of instruction other than those books placed on the reserve shelf by the professor in charge. Dormitory libraries which necessarily vary considerably with different situations, also exhibit this confusion of thought. In many of these, volumes connected with courses of instruction are specifically excluded. The house libraries at Harvard and the two dormitory libraries at the University of Chicago, in which required readings are also to be found, are notable exceptions to this statement.

Before leaving this point, it is well to emphasize that librarians are not to be blamed for this point of view. In too many colleges they do not know the content of courses of instruction for the simple reason that they have not been invited to attend departmental meetings, and in some of these do not even attend meetings of the faculty. It is not surprising, therefore, that they have not been able to make any very definite con-

tribution towards the work of the curriculum. In general, the librarian has not been regarded as a member of the instructional staff. If one doubts this I suggest that he examine any considerable number of college catalogues. Usually he will find the librarian listed along with the superintendent of buildings and grounds, the business officials, and other members of the non-instructional staff.

(3) This leads to the problem of integrating the efforts of the library and teaching staffs. Here the prerequisite to any solution is to elevate the position of the librarian, even if it means getting a new librarian. The librarian must be able to meet his instructional colleagues on equal terms, take his proper place in the counsels of the college, and thus be in constant and easy contact with those with whom he in truth is a co-laborer. At Bennington College I asked the assistant librarian how she kept up with the teaching program. "Oh," she said, "that is easy. We eat with the faculty and hear all about their problems." Direct, effective arrangements of this sort cannot always be secured, but the barriers between librarians and teachers must be eliminated so far as is humanly possible. Furthermore, it is evident that if librarians are to work with college teachers they must be their peers in general ability and scholarly understanding—though not necessarily in specialized knowledge. Librarians have constantly talked about "faculty status" and "faculty privileges." I am not interested in this so much as I am in the librarians' sense of joint responsibility with the faculty for the effectiveness of the teaching program. Colleges are small communities where one generally sells for his or her own worth. The question of status can be left to take care of itself, though it would seem the least of all measures to grant faculty status where librarians are competent and personally qualified.

This strengthening of the librarian's position will place him in the midst of the

natural and official campus channels of communication. It will also enable him to resist all sorts of unreasonable and misguided requests on the part of faculty members, and to make his own distinct contribution to the effectiveness of teaching, in criticisms of reading lists, in suggestions for revising or rewording essay assignments and the like. At present there are few librarians who do not hesitate a long while before making any suggestions to a faculty member concerning his reading list or class assignments. The value of such suggestions has been demonstrated repeatedly. Published illustrations are to be found in Mr. Peyton Hurt's recent pamphlet on *The University and Undergraduate Instruction*.

Besides this general effort to bring the librarian into full membership in the college family, there are various practical measures which can be taken to relate the classroom and the library. Where syllabi for courses are prepared, a copy should go automatically to the librarian. Reading lists should be subject to library criticism and report. As a significant and helpful process I suggest wide extension of the practice followed by some class instructors of having the librarian discuss at class periods the use of library materials in the particular field in which the class is working. This can be a regular feature at the beginning of the course, or can come in connection with special term papers assignments. The use of indices, bibliographies, periodical guides, various types of maps, etc., can be given in this way more effectively than in any guide book or course on how to use the library, while the librarians would get to know both the students and also the program of the course.

(4) A further principle which seems to call for emphasis is that reading does not all take place under one roof. Libraries have been identified too strongly with a single building. I am not referring here to the question of departmental libraries. This difficult question, in which the desirability

of enabling students and faculty members to work across the artificial departmental boundaries—quite apart from the greater economy of a central collection—stands over against the convenience and pedagogical value of a departmental collection, is too complicated and difficult to be treated in a few words. I have in mind rather the fact that observant teachers and administrators have been finding many places on the campus other than in the library building where a number of books can be made to render an outstanding educational service. One of the most useful libraries in the University of Chicago is a modern language collection housed next to the offices of the department and utilized for selection for individual students of volumes suited in subject matter and difficulty. Stephens College has also utilized a number of small collections for special teaching purposes with marked effect. Dormitory libraries represent another effort to place books where students can have easy access to them. I have already referred to the House Libraries at Harvard, where some 6,000 volumes covering the major subjects of undergraduate instruction are placed in the various houses for the use of the several hundred students residing in each. Fraternity libraries, sometimes entirely owned by the organization, sometimes supplemented by the loans from the central library, have been used to reach these small groups of students. In all these developments the basic principle is simply to place books where they will perform an educational service. But it should be clearly understood that to a very considerable extent such small collections must be duplicates of a central library, since, otherwise, the loss to the college community as a whole would in many cases out-balance the gains.

This extension of the idea of the library needs to be carried still further. On a college campus books should be in the air. They should be the meat and bread of those who live there. Every effort should be made to make them easily available and their in-

fluence felt. The college book store is an opportunity which has been little used to this end. It should not be allowed to become a purely commercial institution but a purveyor of truth and beauty, supplementing the central library at certain points, and presenting in attractive manner volumes which are stimulating and instructive. On its board of directors should sit members of the faculty and the librarian. Most college libraries buy their books through the college book store, thus securing a better discount. We have been quicker to see and exploit the financial possibilities in the book store than we have the educational ones. Teaching is done indirectly as well as directly by the atmosphere which the student breathes, and there can be few more effective ways by which the college can impress the student with the importance of books in the life of an intelligent man than by a different type of book store from the ones which serve most college communities. Incidentally, I might add that the integration of the book store and the library might provide a beautiful solution of the acute problems of duplicate volumes which come to the library in so many ways. They could be sold through the book store at very reduced prices, aiding libraries, aiding students, and aiding learning.

(5) These various suggestions lead to what is of fundamental importance—no college library will rise far above the college in which it is located. The basic approach to the question of library use is through the faculty. Unless the instructional staff is library-minded, that is—knows the library and what is equally important, knows how to use it for instructional ends, the book collection will be little used. Here is the most difficult problem of all. In the long run a faculty will get the sort of library service it wants. If teachers really want nothing more than a few books placed on reserve there is no point in elaborate efforts towards a more vital library service. Many librarians are convinced that not more than a third of the

average faculty knows how to make good use of the library in teaching. This is merely to say that the problem of the library is fundamentally the problem of good teaching. To enter that discussion would carry this paper beyond its proper limits.

The failure of the classroom lecture system as a means of educating masses of students is now painfully evident. Many institutions are endeavoring to provide individual instruction, but it would seem only the wealthier colleges will be able to do this on any complete scale. The answer to the dilemma seems to require the student, in part at least, to educate himself, a method which has been proven sound in many ages. In such self-education books and the library are of paramount importance. In directing and aiding the student in the use of books, librarians and teacher must work as one. To this end we need better librarians, a library program more pertinent to a college campus, and a fuller recognition of the importance and value of the librarian's task.

HARVIE BRANSCOMB

THE PROBLEM OF "DEMOCRACY" IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

(The following statement appearing in *College Topics*, student newspaper at the University of Virginia, was written by Dr. Richard Heath Dabney, professor of history at the University. It ended with a plea to Governor Price to lead Virginia in the educational footsteps of Thomas Jefferson, but it contains an analysis of our educational problems that will elicit interest from every public school teacher. Those whose support make leadership possible are vitally concerned in such an improvement as is here proposed.—EDITOR.)

NO professor, I imagine, was startled by the list, given in a recent issue of *College Topics*, of words misspelled by students. Bad spelling, ungrammatical sentences, and sloppy thinking by students may elicit heartfelt groans from professors at this and other universities, but are too familiar to excite surprise.

But let us consider the question why so many unprepared students are admitted to the University.

To begin with, it would be absurd to lay all the blame upon either the faculty or the administration. Low standards of admission to, and low standards of graduation from college are not peculiar to this institution. In fact, there are many others where standards are decidedly lower than ours.

The malady is doubtless due to numerous causes. But perhaps a certain conception of "democracy" underlies more than one of them. The notion that one man is just as good as another, and perhaps a little better, has something to do with it. Every one is of course aware that all men are not equally capable of becoming star football players or prizefighters. Yet there is a vague sort of idea that any man can acquire "general culture," attested by a bachelor's degree.

Did Thomas Jefferson, father of the Democratic party, and father of the University of Virginia, believe any such nonsense as that? By no means. Jefferson wished Virginia to establish schools where every child should have a chance to learn reading, writing and simple arithmetic. But he did not consider it the state's duty to continue indefinitely to give free instruction to those who were either too stupid or too lazy to profit by that instruction.

On the contrary, he emphatically believed that only the really fit pupils in any grade should be given free tuition in a higher grade. For he well knew that the unfit are an actual clog upon the progress of the fit and upon the efforts of the teachers. No one should expect a teacher to squeeze blood out of a turnip or to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

Even had Jefferson never read the Gospel according to St. Matthew, he would have known that men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. Hence he knew that only the best pupils in the lower classes should be allowed to enter the high school, that only the best scholars in the high school should be permitted to enter college, and, of course, that only the best college students should receive degrees and go on