

Chapter II

THE SCHOOL LIBRARY SUPERVISOR AT THE STATE LEVEL

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The problems confronting the school library supervisor fall in a pattern of categories although there is much overlapping. This chapter deals with some of the problems which stand out under these various headings:

I - Understanding the state as a whole and its needs

Before the state school library supervisor can begin to plan his work very definitely, he must first know a great deal about his own state, not only educationally but economically, socially, politically, and in every other respect. He must also know his state in relation to other states. While there is a wealth of statistical data available, that is only one source of information. On the spot observations need to be made, for no two localities within the state may be identical. The philosophy of the people, the educational philosophy of the educators, have direct bearing on the program of school library supervision. Truly, how to become saturated with information about the state is a problem. It affects, for example, what are attainable standards which should be promoted for the state as contrasted with what may be desirable long-term standards for school libraries per se. This one area may boil down to whether or not national school library standards should be the state standards for accreditation of schools. This problem is placed first because it has direct bearing on all other problems which are faced.

II - The supervisor's capacity for the job.

The supervisor's capacity for the job is of concern to the state school administrator as he seeks to find a qualified person, but it becomes a personal problem for each supervisor as soon as he is on the job. It behooves each to be constantly aware of it. The position of a state school library supervisor is without doubt the most challenging, exciting, and exacting position in the school library profession. It is also the most exhausting. Therein lies one of the acute problems of the state school library supervisor--having the physical and emotional, let alone the intellectual, stamina to stick it out long enough for results to be apparent.

Because the success or failure of the program is so inherently tied up with the individual who heads it, first consideration will be given to some of the attributes which seem desirable in this leader. The qualities are largely those which are important for any position of leadership: a sense of humor, alertness and enthusiasm, ability to put one's self in the other

fellow's position, ability to put the job to be done above personal feelings, a vision that sees beyond the measure of today. The supervisor may expect certain criticism, for the public will be exacting and demanding. The supervisor must anticipate trends and needs, must face problems with courage and tact, with vision and knowledge and understanding. All of these attributes can be developed by conscious effort to make them become habits. Perhaps supervisors need to look at themselves to see how they measure up in their own estimation for it is certain that they will be measured by others.

There are other qualifications which may be set: (1) a good general education, (2) thorough knowledge of the field of school libraries, and (3) professional standing in both the educational and library fields. Because of his professional duties, the school library supervisor must have specific knowledge as to -

- (1) How to supervise in his own field, and how its administration fits into the whole educational program.
- (2) What the objectives of the entire school program are and the contribution which school libraries can make to it.
- (3) How school libraries have developed historically - nationally and also in his own state.
- (4) How state and federal legislation, rules, and regulations affect his department.
- (5) What his philosophy of education is and what his philosophy of school libraries is.
- (6) How to use administrative devices that are common in his field.
- (7) How to recognize good school library practices and how to improve those that are below standards.
- (8) What equipment and supplies for school libraries are desirable, how they are used, and what are the best sources.
- (9) What materials are desirable, how they are used, and what are the best sources.

- (10) How to use statistical methods for interpreting school libraries - what to collect, how to collect, and how to present the information.
- (11) How to organize materials and to prepare courses of study and other bulletins.
- (12) How to carry on an adequate public relations program.

Pursuing the matter of philosophy a little farther, a few years ago a distinguished librarian flatly stated that there was no philosophy of school libraries and that school librarians themselves had no idea where they were going. Now I did not agree with him because I thought our philosophy was pretty well stated in School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow,¹ but I made a point for some time of asking school librarians what their philosophy was, and I heard considerable stammering and stuttering. I spelled mine out in 1946 and my philosophy is still the same, although I hope its growing edge has matured as the years have progressed. Now the problem in relation to the state school library supervisor's philosophy is that he make clear what he hopes to accomplish and why he considers libraries a necessary part of the educational program, and that he know the area of his responsibility and be able to justify his work on the basis of his philosophy.

III - The supervisor's responsibilities.

If all the state supervisors were to write out their areas of responsibility, it is likely that while no two would be alike there would be considerable similarity. Normally the employment of a state school library supervisor pre-supposes a recognized need for skilled guidance in the area of libraries. His especial responsibility is to conceive of the possibilities of the library in the school program and of the aspects of it which make it effective. He is expected to think ahead of his group, but to remain behind to work with it. He must see the library as an integral part of the whole educational program rather than an adjunct of it, and at the same time, must find ways of helping others to utilize the library's potential possibilities.

The statement in School Libraries for Today and Tomorrow is concise and pointed, and bears repetition here. "The state director of the school library program should have the responsibility for

1. Interpretation of school library service, the adaptation of national school library standards to make them consistent with the state program, and the promotion of continual qualitative and quantitative improvements in school library service.

2. Evaluation of school libraries and stimulation of every school, elementary and secondary, to reach or exceed state and national standards.
3. Interpretation of state laws and regulations regarding school libraries.
4. Cooperation with other education and library agencies and departments of the state and with institutions responsible for the education of teachers and librarians.
5. Provision for information, advice, and aid to school librarians, other teachers, and administrators through school visits, conferences, and correspondence on problems related to school libraries.
6. Preparation and distribution of materials which interpret the work of the school library and promote improved library support and service.
7. Collection and organization of statistical and factual data about school libraries in the state.
8. Encouragement of school librarians to participate in local, state, and national professional organizations and activities!²

It may be well to tie down some of these responsibilities more specifically. What does the state school library supervisor do? The duties may be listed many ways and one of the best references on the topic is an article entitled "A Study of the Need for a State School Library Consultant Service for California," in the Bulletin of the School Library Association of California for November 1949.³ For myself I have phrased them as follows:

INTERPRETS school library service by

- (1) Building an understanding and appreciation of libraries in the educative process.
- (2) Meeting with staff members of educational groups to share in curriculum building and to introduce books and materials.
- (3) Representing the library idea among administrators, supervisors, classroom teachers, and special teacher groups.

- (4) Talking to groups and individuals, both professional and non-professional, about the services which should be expected from libraries.
- (5) Collecting, tabulating, interpreting, and distributing statistical data about libraries.
- (6) Writing for publication articles on library achievements and services.

IMPROVES school library service by

- (1) Improving the collections of books and materials through examination of new materials and by advice on purchases; by preparation of recommended lists of materials; by assistance in weeding collections of out-of-date and unsuitable materials; by helping with technical information on the organization of the collection.
- (2) Giving help in planning library quarters through advice on location and needs; preparation of floor plans; recommendations for decorations, furnishings, and equipment.
- (3) Assistance in locating and placing personnel through cooperation with training agencies, and by in-service education programs to make for more effective service.
- (4) Assisting in the preparation of budgets to provide adequately for school library services.
- (5) Developing a program of instruction in the use of library materials to meet the needs of teachers and pupils on all grade levels.
- (6) Promoting standards of service suited to the educational needs and by evaluating the resulting program.
- (7) Coordinating the whole program of school library service.

EXTENDS school library service by

- (1) Recognizing the need for school library service in elementary as well as high schools and by working to provide library service at all educational levels.
- (2) Cooperating with other library agencies.

- (3) Cooperating with library and teacher training agencies.
- (4) Participating in curriculum development.
- (5) Publicizing the school library program.

Every one of these responsibilities has its own peculiar problems, each of which might be explored in detail.

IV - The supervisor's use of time.

An acute problem related to the carrying out of duties is how to encompass all those activities effectively in, shall we say, a twenty-four hour day. Perhaps an honest-to-goodness time-motion study needs to be made somewhere and then specific recommendations forwarded to each supervisor. Here is some detailed data which may point up this problem. In the period from 1930-1940, a tabulation made from the monthly reports made by the writer to the North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction reveals the following:

Number of school visits	1311
Counties visited for definite work in schools (N. C. has 100 counties)	100
Teachers meetings attended	170
Conferences of Superintendents and Principals attended	140
Articles prepared for publication	86
Radio programs given	35
Other meetings attended	345
Mimeographed bulletins prepared and distributed	77
Mimeographed "School Library Letters" prepared and sent to school libraries	74
Printed manuals prepared on school library service	13
Speeches	243

Correspondence bulks large in the supervisor's work. A day by day count in 1940 in North Carolina showed that 2,370 pieces of first class and 1,891 pieces of second and fourth class mail were received during the year, a total of 4,261 pieces. During the last six months of 1940 364 books were received, and read, from publishers for review. It so happened that a study of what the state school supervisors in North Carolina did with their time was made during 1940 and each of the staff was asked to prepare certain data, which explains the use of that particular year. The problem of time utilization is a pressing one. Most of the time one feels as if he were trying to irrigate the Sahara Desert by spraying it with an atomizer.

A log diary is an excellent means of finding how the time is being used and as a guide in planning work. Here is a sample taken from the writer's experience:

August 6, 1945

There have been so many questions as to what a state school library supervisor does that I have decided to keep a diary for a while.

9:00 A. M. - 12:00 noon - Checked the printer's copy of the high school library list for the Textbook Division. Noted O. P. 's from previous year, re-starred list, starred new titles, checked against list of new books (318 titles) to see which titles were not added, checked with T. D. for reasons.

12:00 - 12:40 P. M. - Read morning mail and wrote two letters requiring immediate attention. (Secretary on vacation)

2:00 - 4:00 P. M. - Attended conference of our staff and nutrition staff on coordinated instructional program. Worked with nutritionist on outline for local workshop groups.

4:15 - 4:40 - Met with State Committee on youth problems to discuss questions on possibilities of the school and public library helping youth to better adjustment.

4:55 - 5:20 P. M. - Read Library Journal

August 7, 1945 - Tuesday

The chief activity of the day was the preparation of proposals for changes in the certification of school librarians. Research had been done earlier. The writing of six hand-written pages required the entire morning. The supporting-data statement is yet to be done. The following interruptions occurred between 9:00 A. M. and 12:30 P. M.: 15 Minute request made by staff member on how to starch and stretch crocheted mats; 20 minutes with county and city superintendents on references for course in world history,

comments on renovation of junior high school library planned earlier, commendation that librarian is being employed extra month; 20 minute conference about certification proposals; 5 minutes to locate information on a modern author for staff member and suggest book-club book; 5 minutes on possible outline for study of library materials for teachers for local study workshops, agreed to prepare outline; 5 minutes to help negro porter find out where to deliver some mimeographed materials; 15 minutes to consider approval of applicant for provisional certification for high school library position at Belmont; 2 minutes to arrange for afternoon conference with Dr. H.; 10 minutes to receive and answer telegram; 5 minutes to check library reports from two schools for one of the supervisors. After each interruption one must go back over material being prepared and "find" himself again. After lunch, sent out 10 copies of each of 3 mimeographed items on religious books requested by two superintendents.

2:15 - 4:45 P. M. - Worked with Dr. H. planning the Southern Association workshops to be held in Atlanta in October - Interrupted by 1st grade teacher to discuss manuscript of book she has prepared. Made appointment for this two weeks hence. One telephone call in P. M.

7:30 - 9:30 P. M. - read manuscript on public libraries received from A. L. A. for criticism.

August 8, 1945 - Wednesday

The project for the day was to check 321 titles with annotations received from Alamance County teachers following their study on knowing and using books. Actually 17 titles were checked. Other activities which were carried on instead of that anticipated were -

- (1) Telephone conversation about the N. C. E. A. Library list. (3 min.)
- (2) Conversation with purchasing agent about renewal of subscription to Subscription Books Bulletin. (5 min.)
- (3) Checked handwritten material prepared last week on Alamance County workshop to see that the explanatory material was ready for typist - 25 pages. (about 20 min.)
- (4) Conference with reading specialist from Row, Peterson on primary readers offered for state adoption. (45 min.)
- (5) Arranged by telephone for Library Commission to send over back issue of magazine wanted by staff member. (5 min.)
- (6) Checked typed program for Southern Association meeting in October and indicated suggestions for rearrangement. (15 min.)

- (7) Talked to Miss G. from N. C. E. A. who brought library list for me to star. (10 min.)
- (8) Collected material on Walter de la Mare for staff member who will give talk. (20 min.)

12 - 1:00

- (9) Attended hearing on Scott, Foresman readers offered for adoption. (60 min.)
- (10) Went over program in 6 above with Dr. H.
- (11) Started starring N. C. E. A. list (15 min.)
- (12) Discussed reading materials for Durham County Tubercular Hospital with Director. Got up some free materials for adult non-readers. Offered to check a list for hospital use and get other free materials sent from warehouse (40 min.)
- (13) Completed starring N. C. E. A. library list (30 min.)
- (14) Took list to N. C. E. A. at 3:30 P. M.

3:45 - 4:45 P. M. - Personal appointment with doctor for check up.

There is absolutely nothing in that recital which isn't altogether an actual fact. It must be evident from this that the state school library supervisor faces no problem greater than how to get done day by day the things that need to be accomplished.

V - The Supervisor's Techniques.

How to carry out projected activities effectively and efficiently is a persistent problem. No one questions the desirability of approaching all problems democratically. This is of first concern. The supervisor must ask himself, "how do I, as a specialist, work with others as a member of a team concerned with the same general goals?" The school library supervisor must work with superintendents, with other supervisors, with teachers, with pupils, with teacher-training and library training agencies. Should the supervisor approach these others directly; or wait for them to take the initiative? What is the fine line between leadership and acceptance of direction?

The state school library supervisor has responsibility for participating in the educational opportunities for boys and girls and that carrying out this responsibility means participation in staff meetings, in curriculum planning,

and in all types of in-service programs. The supervisor's concept of library service is interpreted through relations with Parent-Teacher Associations, women's clubs, men's clubs, newspapers, radio, television, and other public associations. There is a need for aids to help put the message across, for example, a filmstrip or series of slides which interprets the functions of the school library as effectively as the housing of the school library is presented in the filmstrip Planning School Libraries. In-service studies for teachers in the utilization of library materials are equally as important as in-service programs to explore problems of the librarians.

Sooner or later every state school library supervisor faces certain basic questions. What is the best means of interpreting and extending the elementary school library. Why is a single, combined library better than a series of unintegrated classroom collections and how can its value be demonstrated? What are some ways of recruiting young people into the school library profession? How can library training agencies be encouraged to give more consideration and more effective courses related to the school library program? How can professional organizations, and especially A. L. A., be led to recognize the part that school libraries and school librarians play in the total professional library picture? What type of professional courses does the supervisor need in order to carry out an effective program of school library supervision at the state level? Supervisors have the leadership responsibility to find ways and means to answer some of these questions.

VI - Evaluating the supervisor's program.

Sometimes the state school library supervisor is so close to the job that it is difficult to measure or evaluate progress. Some instruments to help in this regard would be very useful. We now have the cooperative study Evaluative Criteria⁴ and Henne's A Planning Guide for the High School Library Program⁵ for weighing the worth of the high school library program. We have the Elementary Evaluative Criteria⁶ for considering the elementary school library program. We need some guide for ourselves to give us more confidence as well as more prestige in extending our programs. Perhaps the bulletin projected at the U. S. Office of Education will be the first step.

Dr. Wiles' definition of evaluation points up so many of the problems involved. He says "Evaluation is the process of making judgments that are to be used as a basis for planning. It consists of establishing goals, collecting evidence concerning growth or lack of growth toward goals, making judgments about the evidence, and revising procedures and goals in light of the judgments. It is a procedure for improving the product, the process, and even the goals themselves."⁷

Finally, in summary, the problems of the state school library supervisor revolve around the:

- (1) Necessity for having a plan for a unified program with clear and consistent, but understandably flexible objectives.
- (2) Necessity for having a schedule (time limit) on some activities.
- (3) Necessity for economy in performing certain routines.
- (4) Necessity for knowing what duties to attempt and when and how.
- (5) Necessity for knowing how and when to delegate responsibility.
- (6) Necessity for continuous as well as "result" evaluation.

Progress is often slow with consequent frustration and feeling of failure. At such times it may help to remember what Dr. J. Y. Joyner, then State Superintendent of North Carolina, said to a group of educators in 1903: "Every great thing is growth. Most great things are slow growth . . . We are in danger of becoming discouraged unless, sometimes, we stop to take a glance at the accumulated work wrought out in long periods of time through the combined efforts of many men working at a common task in larger spheres of action."

The problems of state school library supervision may be great, but they should not be insurmountable if we attack them cooperatively and democratically.

REFERENCES

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