



## Evaluation Trends

FELIX E. HIRSCH

MORE THAN ONE-THIRD of a century has passed since the junior college librarians of the country got together for the first time in an official fashion. That was their round-table meeting at the American Library Association Conference in Los Angeles in June 1930. At that time they agreed on standards designed to assure the struggling junior college libraries of better days to come. The minimum requirements for libraries serving up to 500 students were 10,000 well selected volumes (with an initial book stock of 5,000); for up to 1,000 students, 15,000 volumes; and for more than 1,000 students, not less than 20,000 volumes. There were precise prescriptions in dollars and cents for the size of the book budget. The minimum staff for a library serving 500 students or less was to consist of two professional librarians.<sup>1</sup>

Thirty years later, the Committee on Standards of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), arrived, after long deliberations, at a set of standards which were not much more demanding than what had seemed proper to the junior college librarians in 1930. Nevertheless, some administrators and even some librarians thought that the committee had asked for too much. In a way, this indicates that the library in the two-year college, while its number has grown enormously, has not enjoyed the same good fortune as did its counterpart in the four-year institution. While libraries in liberal arts and state colleges have witnessed a phenomenal development of resources, rapid growth of staff, and a vast improvement of physical plant in the last generation, many junior college libraries are still struggling to meet their most elementary needs. It is all the more important that every possible effort be made by the profession to implement the ALA Standards for Junior College Libraries.

Felix E. Hirsch is Librarian and Professor of History at Trenton (N.J.) State College. He was chairman of the Association of College and Research Libraries Committee on Standards from 1957 to 1963.

The Junior College Section of ACRL agreed on a set of standards in 1956, after extended discussions. But the Board of Directors of ACRL felt a need for their reexamination and turned the document over to the ACRL Committee on Standards at the ALA conference in Washington, in June 1959. The committee chairman was instructed to proceed with deliberate speed, since the standards had been in the making for a long time. An additional reason for the reworking was that the new standards, as far as possible, should run parallel to the ALA Standards for College Libraries which had been prepared by the same committee and had been well received.

The committee began to work immediately on its new assignment. Several leaders among the junior college librarians of the country were added to its ranks, such as Ruth E. Scarborough (Centenary College for Women), Norman E. Tanis (Henry Ford Community College), Orlin C. Spicer (Morton Junior College), and Lottie M. Skidmore (Joliet Junior College), who served in an advisory capacity. Many other junior college librarians were consulted in regard to various crucial points. The committee was also able to use the most recent nationwide statistics of junior college libraries prior to their publication.

In November 1959, the committee held a two-day work session in Chicago at ALA headquarters. All members were present, including those from other types of academic libraries: Helen M. Brown (Wellesley College), Donald O. Rod (State College of Iowa), and Helen Welch (University of Illinois). The committee drafted a new set of standards which was submitted for suggestions and criticisms to presidents, deans, and librarians of junior colleges, executive secretaries of accrediting agencies, and leaders in the field of librarianship. The committee greatly benefited from the advice and constructive comments, but recognized that the final responsibility for the standards rested with its own members.

In January 1960, a second draft was prepared which embodied many of the critical observations received. This draft was presented to the ACRL Board of Directors at the midwinter meeting in 1960 and was adopted unanimously. The intent of the new standards was then explained by the present writer at a meeting of the Junior College Library Section, at the ALA conference in Montreal on June 20, 1960. The observations were warmly received, and no hostile word was uttered in the extended discussion.<sup>2</sup> The writer met the same positive reception for his presentation of the committee's work, wherever he

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spoke about the standards to junior college librarians, e.g., in Maryland, New York State, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. On the last-mentioned occasion, he shared the platform with Dean John Harvey of the Graduate Library School at Drexel Institute, who had visited many junior college libraries. In commenting on the Standards, Harvey said that “. . . they suggest a good level of service higher than that now obtained by most of these libraries. All junior college administrators and faculty members should improve their libraries to meet these standards.”<sup>3</sup> Harvey urged that the Standards should be applied in the proper spirit. He concluded: “If a spirit of cooperation is missing and there is no eagerness to improve the library’s usefulness, then these standards will be useless.”<sup>3</sup>

This “spirit of cooperation” has been lacking at times. It cannot be denied that there are still junior college administrators who, in spite of professions to the contrary, do not believe in the importance of high-level library service for their institutions. To some of them, the Standards seem unreasonable in their demands. Instead of developing strong collections of their own, they would rather place the burden of providing adequate service on the public library in town or on other well-stocked libraries in the area. It is deplorable that some major treatises on the junior college, written by noted experts in the field of education and administration, do not stress the need for good library service. In fact, some of the most recent works—like Leland L. Medsker’s *The Junior College: Progress and Prospect*<sup>4</sup> and Ralph R. Fields’ *The Community College Movement*<sup>5</sup>—do not even refer to the library in their index. This would be unthinkable in any good book on the four-year college.

The new Standards were designed to fight this spirit of neglect or outright hostility. Like its companion piece, the ALA Standards for College Libraries, the document is written in readable, concise language so that it should not be cumbersome to busy administrators because of wordiness or excessive technical detail. Its emphasis is on quality. On the other hand, some quantitative suggestions are included since such yardsticks are indispensable, especially in weaker institutions. The figures proposed, as for the size of the collections, etc., were chosen after careful deliberation. It is not expected that they will be attained overnight, especially in a recently established institution, but they do provide a reasonable goal for at least the 1960’s, if not beyond. It is important to note that the new Standards are meant to serve the entire country. There should not be separate standards for individual

regions or states, nor should there be a basic difference of quality between public and private, religious and non-sectarian two-year institutions as far as their libraries are concerned. In general, the new Standards are flexible enough to meet various situations which are bound to arise in the several types of junior colleges, but they are based on firm principles.

Today, it is more important than at any previous time to have strong junior college libraries. The reasons for this, which were uppermost in the minds of the ACRL Committee on Standards, should be obvious now also to others, viz., enrollments are rapidly increasing, academic programs are becoming more varied, and emphasis on independent study and on general education is growing. Students who expect to transfer to four-year institutions should be exposed to a well-rounded collection in their first two years so that they may compete on even terms with their fellow students in a senior college; this writer has observed the importance of this point again and again when dealing with bewildered transfer students in his own college. While some persons say it is "unrealistic" to aim for such strong libraries, the Committee on Standards believed that this was the opportune time to ask for them. The American public has never been as keenly aware of the need for better support of higher education as in the past few years. Sputnik opened the public's eyes to the dangers of complacency and mediocrity in education, if it did nothing else.

The junior college library of tomorrow should be well enough supported that it need not rely on the charity of other institutions for the performance of its essential services. This, of course, should not militate against intelligent cooperation between neighboring libraries to make the dollars spent by each of them go further; in fact, the Standards stress the desirability of such collaboration.

The essence of the new Standards is the concept of the library as the intellectual powerhouse of the junior college and, as a corollary, the concept of the junior college librarian as an educator. The junior college librarian must be a person deserving to be accepted as an equal by the teaching faculty. He (or she) should command respect by an evident deep concern for good books and for educational problems. At one time librarians could afford to be primarily custodians of their collections, more worried about circulation records and gadgets than about the inside of their books, but today broadly educated, widely interested librarians are needed.

The size of the library staff will, of course, depend upon the struc-

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ture and the financial support of the institution, on the type of curriculum or curricula offered, and on the prevailing teaching methods. However, no adequate service is imaginable unless there are at least two professional librarians available. They usually have to cover a long schedule of working hours, because many junior colleges operate evening divisions; on the other hand, it is essential that a librarian be on duty at all times the library is open for full service. The executive secretary of one regional accrediting agency felt that junior college libraries actually need a minimum of three professional librarians just as much as the libraries of four-year colleges do. The ACRL Committee on Standards, however, believed that the operation of the junior college library is usually less complex than that of the senior college library and that two professional librarians would suffice. Although this suggested minimum size is the same as that espoused by the Junior College Round-Table in 1930, it did arouse the criticism of one junior college expert. B. Lamar Johnson questioned the figure, because a majority of junior college libraries (more than three out of five) had only a single librarian.<sup>6</sup> The Committee on Standards had been aware of this fact, but considered a junior college library with but one professional librarian totally inadequate on principle for the service to be performed. On this point, as on some others, it was vigorously upheld by Robert T. Jordan, a staff member of the Council on Library Resources and a former California junior college librarian. He stated, on the basis of his own experiences:

I would like to emphasize that conditions in the average junior college library today are deplorable, if not shocking. We are faced with this question—should a group setting up desirable standards relate itself to existing, grossly inadequate conditions, or to standards accepted by expert opinion as necessary? <sup>7</sup>

Dean Harvey concurred that “this standard is a modest one.” With such staffs as he had seen on his visits to many junior colleges, “. . . librarians could come nowhere near achieving the quality of service suggested in the standards.” <sup>8</sup>

The Committee on Standards did not follow the example of the Junior College Round-Table of 1930 which had proposed specific minimum budgets; intentionally it excluded any reference to dollar figures. It reasoned that the purchasing power of our currency is subject to so many factors that it would be unwise to be committed to specific sums. Who would dare to predict in this era of constantly ris-

ing publishing costs how many books could be purchased for \$100 two or three years hence? Therefore it seemed advisable to select a percentage figure, as had proved to be an effective procedure in the ALA Standards for College Libraries. The same figure of 5 per cent of the institution's general and educational budget was chosen. This did not seem excessive in view of the fact that the median figure (published in *College and Research Libraries*)<sup>9</sup> was 4 per cent. The committee believed it was a reasonable goal to raise the figure by one per cent over the next several years; junior college librarians consulted recently are fully agreed on this point. Of course, institutions which did not support their libraries properly in the past or are now expanding their curricular offerings rapidly, may find it necessary to invest considerably more than 5 per cent to bring library service up to the desired level. This is an important factor which should not be overlooked in planning the library budget for a period of years ahead.

It is always difficult to determine the size of a book collection which is needed to serve the curricular needs and the general reading interests of a good junior college. There is no miraculous formula that the committee could have proposed. But the experience of good libraries, such as those at Bradford, Briarcliff, Centenary, and Colby Junior Colleges, indicates that at least 20,000 well-chosen volumes should be available in institutions with less than 1,000 students. This was also the figure suggested by many of the junior college librarians whom the committee consulted. The committee was fully aware of the fact the median at the time was only slightly above 10,000 volumes—a fact which B. Lamar Johnson stressed in his criticism—and that there are some states in which the average collection then barely reached 4,000 volumes. But even if one takes 10,000 volumes as a basis, it was not unrealistic to propose 20,000 volumes as the goal for a decade, because many junior college librarians agreed that an annual accession rate of about 1,000 volumes would be reasonable. It is interesting that Charles L. Trinkner, reporting on the Florida situation, arrived independently at the same figure of 20,000 well-chosen volumes as the desirable minimum, and added that it “. . . should be available to the student body as soon as possible after the institution is open for its academic business.”<sup>10</sup> Trinkner also took the leadership in compiling the new list, *Basic Books for Junior College Libraries: 20,000 Vital Titles*.<sup>11</sup> This list represents a great step toward the implementation of the Standards at a time when six out of every ten junior college libraries still have less than 20,000 volumes each. By referring to this list, it

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should be much easier to give junior college library collections the vitality and strength which many of them lack. It is gratifying that *Basic Books* will be kept up to date by supplements, since some earlier lists of considerable merit lost their usefulness over the years for lack of such a device. Naturally, some aspects of the list have not escaped occasional criticism, but this does not detract from its value as a pioneering effort. The list can now be supplemented also by the use of *Choice* and of *New Books Appraised* in the *Library Journal*.

The Standards try to be as explicit as possible regarding the library collection; the emphasis clearly is on raising its quality. First of all, the need for a strong reference collection is underscored. It should include standard works in all major fields of knowledge, far beyond the limits of the curriculum actually offered at the time. Indexes, abstract journals, and subject bibliographies will be important, even when the collection in the areas concerned is not very rich, because faculty and students have in this way at least an approach to materials that could be secured by interlibrary loan or some form of duplication. It is fortunate that the new list of *Basic Books* includes 300 reference works; thus it goes far beyond the practical hints offered in a long footnote to the Standards. Next, the library should be well equipped to support the requirements of the classroom by a great variety of suitable literature. Otherwise textbook teaching, with all its educational shortcomings, is inevitable. The collection should also contain enough attractive, timely, and thought-provoking books of a more general nature to develop in students the life-time habit of good reading. The fact that students can now buy a wealth of high-caliber paperbacks in many fields of knowledge at a reasonable price does not relieve the library of its obligation to do its full share in this respect. Finally, the need of instructors to keep abreast of the progress of scholarship should not be overlooked; a certain generosity along these lines may pay heavy dividends in the long run.

Every college library today is faced with the problem of duplication. As enrollments increase, the need for two or three or even four copies of key titles becomes imperative, especially when they are required reading in several courses or several sections. This pressure will grow when the number of students exceeds 1,000. The Standards suggest that the book stock should be enlarged by 5,000 volumes for every additional 500 students; this makes duplication possible while slightly expanding the number of titles represented in the basic collection. Of course, it would not be advisable even in a very large

junior college to buy any textbooks wholesale for the library collection; "key titles" are treatises of much higher merit than that. No book collection can be kept "alive," unless library staff and faculty join hands in a regular systematic effort of weeding obsolete materials. Librarians are often too timid in this respect. They do not realize that many beginning college students assume naively that their library has only good books. Failure to weed will, therefore, be harmful indeed and lead to many misunderstandings.

Trinkner's list of *Basic Books* contains 150 periodical titles; they are all geared to the needs of the junior college. This writer would like to state his firm belief that it does not do any harm to subscribe to some journals that might look "too scholarly," for it is a good experience for students to have to make an intellectual effort to master relevant information or a novel point of view. An ever-present danger that should be guarded against is that of parochialism; some journals from abroad will have a salutary influence. It should be noted that the Standards urge junior college librarians to adhere firmly to the stand of the American Library Association on the subject of censorship. It is essential that the junior college library provide its readers with materials which present all sides of controversial issues. We must stand up against timidity and expediency in our own ranks at a time when so many public pressures are directed against courageous librarians in their quest of truth.

As one travels through this country, he finds only too often (although there are some remarkable exceptions) that the junior college library is in an unattractive corner of a building, in two or three classrooms which have been "converted" to library use. The books are housed on overcrowded shelves, and the seating capacity is low. The writer's observations gibe with those of Dean Harvey who praises some beautiful modern buildings he has seen, but "on the other hand, several of the libraries had physical facilities which were miserable, shabbier, smaller, and poorer than most high-school libraries."<sup>12</sup> One might wonder who would wish to sit down in such cheerless quarters; but many students, all of them commuters, have no other place on campus in which to do their research and their serious studying. Thus they are doubly at a disadvantage as compared with resident students in good four-year colleges who have both nice dormitory rooms and an attractive library building at their disposal. In the light of these considerations, the seating capacity of 25 per cent of the student body, which the Standards suggest, is not at all extravagant. B. Lamar



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Johnson took issue with this figure, pointing out that the median library seating capacity in the California junior colleges had been only 8 per cent in 1955/56. He felt that the proposal of 25 per cent was ". . . both unrealistic and unjustified for many—and some might hold most—junior colleges."<sup>13</sup> In his rebuttal, this writer made the point that the California figure did not provide any clue to the seating capacity these junior colleges ought to have, and that at least some California junior college librarians shared the views of the Committee on this matter. He concluded: "We must be realistic, not only in terms of what some junior college administrators believe is feasible, but also in terms of the learning process."<sup>14</sup> Nothing has happened since then to shake his belief that the Standards provide an adequate blueprint for the decade in this respect, even though they may not fulfill every librarian's desires nor please those old-line administrators who are not overly concerned with good library service. Among the outstanding junior college librarians across the country, there are still some who consider a seating capacity of 25 per cent rather high, while there are others who believe that the library should be able to accommodate one-third of the students at one time.

Perhaps the most important constructive effort to supplement the Standards has been that undertaken by the Standards and Criteria Committee of the ACRL Junior College Libraries Section, under the leadership of Norman E. Tanis. This Committee recently prepared "Guidelines for Establishing Junior College Libraries."<sup>15</sup> These "Guidelines" go into considerable detail; they are based on the experience of junior college librarians who have already established new libraries. The "Guidelines" would be of value to administrators and citizen groups who plan new institutions; they include sound advice and precise figures.

No consideration of standards and their implementation will be complete without discussing the question of how the actual quality of library service can be evaluated. There are so many factors to be appraised, if one aims at a fair verdict. Some of the evidence needs careful weighing, and it would be dangerous to draw hasty generalizations, e.g., from statistical records. In the typical open-shelf library, many reader activities can never be measured statistically. However, the per-capita circulation of books on two-week loan to students offers some valuable clues, if one analyzes it over a long period of time.<sup>16</sup> Some academic authorities, like Henry Wriston, President Emeritus of Brown University, consider this statistical information to be the

most important indicator of intellectual health on campus. There is also a degree of validity in some other figures, such as library attendance at various times, use of reserve books, reference questions unanswered, or book requests not filled. Generally speaking, librarians will be well advised not to overrate the significance of such statistical evidence; it is not fool-proof and might even be misleading.

Another approach is a check of the collection against standard lists. *Basic Books* should be a great help in this respect, but the checking of pertinent subject bibliographies of reasonable size could also be enlightening, like the *Concise Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, to give but one example. How many journals does the library subscribe to, which are indexed in *Readers' Guide*, *Applied Science and Technology Index*, etc.? Does the library own most of the titles included in Mary Barton's excellent compilation of *Reference Books*?<sup>17</sup> The answer to these and similar questions may provide the librarian with valuable ammunition in his struggle for better budgets and better service.

At some strategic moment the librarian should make an even bolder move. For instance, when he knows that an evaluation or reevaluation of his institution by its regional accrediting agency is forthcoming, he should go before the faculty and propose a joint survey of the library and all its facilities to ascertain whether the Standards have been met in most respects. At such a juncture, he can usually count on the moral backing of the administration and of the teaching faculty, especially if he has enlisted the active support of the faculty library committee in advance. There is nothing more fruitful and more revealing than such a self-study, undertaken in harmonious collaboration with book-minded faculty members, provided all steps are carefully planned.<sup>18</sup> Another benefit of this kind of self-survey is that the detailed library questionnaire, which usually forms part of the routine preceding the visit by a team of the accrediting agency, can be answered without much extra effort. The author has just followed this procedure once again at Trenton State College, with great success. And the librarian of San Antonio College (Texas), James O. Wallace, reports on an institutional self-study prior to the reevaluation of his college by the Southern Association:

The fact that A.L.A. had a set of standards which faculty members could use to evaluate the library, definitely was a prestige factor on our campus. I heard several members of the Library Committee almost brag that their work was so much easier than that of colleagues

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on other committees, because of these "good" library standards and questions about the standards that they could follow.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, the librarian might propose to his authorities the appointment of an outside consultant, preferably a man or a woman with a nationwide reputation. Such an expert, coming in for a short period only, could perform some very important functions. Having critically examined many other comparable libraries, he may have some startling advice to offer for major improvements. This advice may be more graciously accepted, coming from a prominent outsider with no axe to grind than from the librarian. Such a consultant can render invaluable service, especially when a new library building is under consideration or when a master-plan for the long-range development of the library collections is to be designed. There is only one proviso: the consultant must be willing to take the time for a really careful analysis of the specific situation; no hasty verdict does any good.

The struggle for the Standards has been long, arduous, and at times acrimonious. This writer is happy to have shared in this endeavor, and believes it to be of vital importance to the whole field of higher education. For clearly the status quo is not good enough in this era of rapid educational changes in America, of which the junior college is the most characteristic symbol.<sup>20</sup>

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20. The author gratefully acknowledges the good suggestions and valuable comments received from librarians of junior colleges; among them are Catherine Cardew, Briarcliff College, New York; Shirley Edsall, Corning Community College, New York; Hubert E. Hall, formerly at San Jose City College, California; Monique B. Harriton, Los Angeles City College, California; Elizabeth Martin, Foothill College, Los Altos Hills, California; Sister Mary Consuelo, C.R.S.M., Gwynedd-Mercy Junior College, Pennsylvania; Frances L. Meals, Colby Junior College, New Hampshire; William J. Nichols, Dutchess County Community College, New York; Peter Simoglou, Northern Essex-Community College, Massachusetts; James O. Wallace, San Antonio College, Texas; and Florence C. Wilmer, Catonsville Community College, Maryland. However, the responsibility for this paper which sums up the ideas he has presented in many places over the last half-dozen years, remains entirely the author's.