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What's Happening to the Elementary School Library?

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Abstract

Far too many adults and children have not had especially pleasant experiences with libraries in the past. The traditional quietness was enough to scare anyone away. Ordinary people didn't exactly feel welcome inside the walls of these "storehouses of wisdom." Today's library has to develop a new image. It must leave the old passive role behind and blossom forth into active participation in the educational process.

WHAT'S HAPPENING
TO THE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY?

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

BY
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Section 1

INTRODUCTION

A school's image of its library is a measure of what it thinks about education. The school that sees education as something it does to students may have a small, attractive library, well patrolled, but largely unused.

The school which thinks of education as something it helps students to do for themselves will have a large, active, busy library with students moving about, learning from books, from other materials, from each other--creating an atmosphere of people in pursuit of something.¹

Far too many adults and children have not had especially pleasant experiences with libraries in the past. The traditional quietness was enough to scare anyone away. Ordinary people didn't exactly feel welcome inside the walls of these "storehouses of wisdom." Today's library has to develop a new image. It must leave the old passive role behind and blossom forth into active participation in the educational process.²

Elementary school libraries are beginning to take on a new look and provide a wide range of new services. This is being accomplished through the integration of traditional

¹Harold Howe II, U.S. Commissioner of Education, Instructor, 77:15, November, 1967.

²James V. Higgins, "There Are Two Sides to Most Walls," Illinois Libraries, 48:267, April, 1966.

libraries and audiovisual departments, putting all the print and non-print materials used for learning into a single unit. There are numerous names for this merger, such as Instructional Media Center (IMC), Resource Center, Media Center, Educational Center or Research Center, but these names are used interchangeably.

Both students and teachers profit from this arrangement. The multi-media approach provides plenty of materials for students to study in depth and in relationship to their personal needs and interests. The teachers can locate all materials and equipment in one stop, which encourages them to make wide use of varied materials to facilitate learning in the classroom. It is also useful in expanding experiences for disadvantaged youth.

Section 2

WHAT IS AN INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER?

SERVICES

One way to define an Instructional Materials Center is to describe the services it would be expected to provide. Switching from a print oriented library to a multi-media program changes the purpose from that of storage to one of service. The IMC has to be a clearing house for all types of media and equipment, keeping it catalogued for easy accessibility. Good organization is essential.

The staff will continually be giving in-service training to students and teachers, providing instruction on how to use the media center and all its facilities most effectively. Through the assistance of an interested staff, students will be guided to develop good reading, listening, and viewing skills, establish desirable study habits, increase in ability to be independent learners, and gradually grow to be critical evaluators of material they have chosen to study.¹

¹The American Library Association and the National Education Association, Standards for School Media Programs, (Chicago:American Library Association; Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1969), 8-9.

The media specialist should be included on curriculum planning committees along with other teachers, act as a resource person and consultant for students and faculty, both in the center and in classrooms, select materials and equipment that will facilitate the educational goals of the school, and assist in the production of instructional materials. He will work in partnership with teachers as part of a team, planning what learning experiences are made available to students. Providing teachers with up-to-date information in a professional collection is also part of the specialist's job.¹

The technicians and aides in the materials center have specific skills which greatly enhance the program and free the librarian for duties of a professional nature. If the center is to provide maximum individualized service, a supportive staff working under the direction of the media specialist is a must. Technicians provide such services as production of teaching aids, helping locate materials, preparing bibliographies, working at the circulation desk, and keeping equipment in good working order.

Aides are needed to assist with circulation, do general office work, keep records, help with the maintenance of equipment, shelving and filing materials, mounting pictures, and housekeeping duties.²

¹ALA and NEA, op. cit., p. 8-9.

²Ibid., p. 15-16.

RESOURCES

The collection in an IMC represents all the print material formerly housed in the library plus the non-print instructional aids from the audiovisual department. It should be chosen by teachers, librarians, audiovisual specialists and students to support the curriculum and serve the learning needs of the students.

All materials in the collection will have equal status. Each item will be found in the catalog. The following list includes many of these materials: (1) books, (2) magazines, (3) newspapers, (4) pamphlets and miscellaneous printed materials found in a traditional library, (5) films, (6) records, (7) filmstrips, (8) transparencies, (9) charts, (10) maps, (11) audio and video tapes, (12) slides, (13) dioramas, (14) games, (15) mock-ups, (16) models, (17) pictures, and (18) learning programs.

Professional materials that formerly were scattered throughout the school can be housed in the IMC and become much more useful tools for making instruction effective. Curriculum guides, catalogs for materials and equipment, units of work, bulletin board materials, sample textbooks, professional literature, courses of study, samples of standardized tests, community resource and fieldtrip files, and lists of resource people are the types of things included in this category.

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Ahlers describes the IMC as "a learning resources center, which comprises a suite of rooms or areas to include, in addition to the traditional reading room and work-storage area, a library classroom for large group instruction, conference rooms for small group discussions, individual study cubicles with listening and viewing equipment and programmed materials for independent study, and the teachers' professional library. Gradually additional space is being provided for the storage and use of many types of audiovisual equipment and materials, and for the production of materials."¹

Because the program of the IMC is centered around service, its location is directly related to its use. Students and teachers will not readily avail themselves of services that aren't easily accessible. Varied activities take place in the center, so it must be large enough for many things to be going on at the same time. There will be a need for both active and quiet areas.

If people are going to interact with media in the most beneficial way, the environment plays a very important part. Sound conditioning, air conditioning, good lighting, plenty of electrical outlets, and the creation of a comfortable, pleasant, inviting atmosphere should be items of prime importance when planning an IMC.

¹Eleanor Ahlers, "Library Service: A Changing Concept," Educational Leadership, 23:453, March, 1966.

Much of the non-print media requires special equipment and devices for viewing or listening. The IMC will provide space for use there or have check-out service so that this equipment may be taken to other locations. The overhead projector, film-strip projector, record player, slide projector, radio, TV receiver, 16mm sound projector, 8mm projector, opaque projector, individual filmstrip and slide viewers, audio tape recorder and portable video tape machine could be found in an IMC.

STAFF

The needs of the users have changed library staff requirements. Professional librarians are still needed, but clerks, technicians, para-professionals and teacher associates play important, essential roles as the supportive staff. Each has different responsibilities in the carrying out of an effective program of service. The attitude of each staff member in dealing with users has great impact on utilization of the center. Each person must be sensitive to people and aware that each user is unique.

The librarian-media specialist needs more than just technical training to tailor the program to fit the needs of a particular school and help the IMC to become the center of the instructional program. In an article written for the Illinois Librarian, Helen Bauerle lists twelve other specialist requirements:

1. Know the curriculum
2. Know the students
3. Know the community
4. Recognize and adhere to the objectives
5. Find what material is available
6. Select new material
 - a. use basic selection tools
 - b. preview AV material when possible
7. Plan physical set up for use, comfort and beauty
8. Catalog all material and organize for use
9. Have a definite course of study for students and faculty
10. Schedule time by classes in elementary school, but keep it flexible
11. Staff center efficiently
12. Give service with a smile¹

The size of the supportive staff is determined by what kind of program is to be carried out. Provision of good service is the deciding factor. The 1969 Standards recommends at least one technician and one clerk for each professional media specialist in schools under 2,000. Not only is it a waste of money to use the specialist's time for clerical, maintenance, processing and production work, but it severely limits the kind and quality of its program.²

¹Helen Bauerle, "A Blueprint for Progress," Illinois Libraries, 52:622, September, 1970.

²ALA and NEA, op. cit., p. 15-16.

Section 3

WHY THIS TRANSITION TO AN INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER?

INCREASED ENROLLMENT

In recent years there have been many changes in the school situation which have, in turn, brought about changes in the objectives of education. Enrollment has increased, with many more students staying in school a longer time, creating an even greater heterogeneous school population to educate. There is a larger percentage of students from culturally deprived backgrounds who are constantly underexposed to intellectual stimulation, both inside and outside of the school. Not much is expected of or offered to them. Superior students are kept in the same ruts their grandfathers were in by constantly being limited to conventional answers. Their creativity, imagination and logical thinking processes are snuffed out.

So often schools have assumed that everyone has the same needs. Students' needs are never alike. Children bring to each new endeavor a composite of past experiences and their own personalities and range in abilities. Some students go all the way through school with no attention paid to how relevant the activities being offered will be to their lives. If only they could be motivated to want to learn it could be a process that continued during a lifetime.

NEW CONCEPTS ABOUT LEARNING

New concepts about learning, coupled with new concepts about child growth and development, have forced educators to switch from the traditional patterns set up to produce conformity. The three R's are not enough. No longer does it suffice for the teacher to be satisfied in the mere transfer of knowledge from his head or a book into the heads of children. Now that we realize that learning is an individual process, the "outstanding purpose of education has become the individual's development of his power of critical and informed thinking."¹ Educators have become aware that the "whole child" comes to school, emotionally as well as intellectually.

In America we find individualism desirable. "Constructive individualism requires frequent self-assessment, appropriate revision of roles and goals, and continuing achievement."² Is there any likelihood that the traditional school can come any where near to helping students understand their own feelings, values and abilities? Can it give them a sense of achievement that will encourage them to keep on learning until they die? An IMC can share in the responsibility of aiding students to become aware of their potential and provide the means for developing it fully.

¹Dr. Oliver Rice, "The Role of the Resource Center in the New Learning," Illinois Libraries, 51:459, June, 1969.

²Ibid.

ADVANCEMENT OF TECHNOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGE

Other areas which influenced the school were the huge advancement of technology and the knowledge explosion. Previously these changes had taken place rather slowly, giving people time to adjust gradually. This is not so today. The presentation of subjects new to man and new to the curriculum became an urgent challenge. Technology and knowledge are expanding at such a rapid rate that predictions indicate a young person entering a career in 1980 may have to be retrained three times during his lifetime. There is such a vast amount of knowledge that no one could be expected to learn everything in his own field.¹ How can the limited exposure received in school help students with the thinking they will need to do throughout their lives? One way might be to so structure the learning situations that students would learn generalizations in a basic subject. Then through transfer, this knowledge could be applied to other situations that might arise. When technology expands at such a rapid rate, human lives do not seem as valuable. Education today must place more emphasis on the dignity and worth of individuals because they are human beings.²

¹Lucille B. Bowie, "Changing Perspectives in Educational Goals and Knowledge of the Learner," Library Trends, 17:346, April, 1969.

²Martha King, "The Library is a Vital Force in Children's Learning," Theory Into Practice, 6:1, February, 1967.

Mechanical improvement and electronic advances have simplified the equipment used in media centers and also made possible the production of new items. The federal government has increased funds for schools, facilitating purchase of greater amounts of print and non-print material and the equipment necessary to use them than local school districts could possibly provide out of already straining budgets.¹

¹Caroline J. Locke, "Today's Materials and Equipment," Instructor, 76:58, October, 1967.

Section 4

BENEFITS FROM AN INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER

INDIVIDUALIZES LEARNING

Through the merger of the print-oriented library and the non-print materials in the audiovisual department, students will reap learning benefits. Each learner has a unique pattern of intellectual growth, and offering all children in a class the same kind and amount of material is an injustice. With school enrollments going up, education could become more and more standardized, making it difficult to consider students as individuals. Individualized instruction requires an abundance of varied material and space for uninterrupted work by students operating at different rates and levels of investigation. The IMC staff can give close individual attention, helping children to locate and evaluate what is pertinent to their needs.¹

It is known that all children do not learn equally well from one kind of material. Students have a familiarity with TV, record players, tape recorders, home movies and slide projectors in their out of school lives.

¹William C. Miller, "Role and Function of the Instructional Materials Center," Educational Leadership, 19:8-10, March, 1961.

Using them to help learning at school seems the logical thing to do. "A person, no matter how young, must be aware of alternatives he has to choose from and be free to pursue them."¹ The IMC provides the raw materials necessary for students to use in thinking and making value judgments; this will help them to grow in wisdom and with confidence in their own abilities.

ACCESSIBILITY OF MATERIALS

Availability is the key word. Many a library patron has been turned off by not being able to locate what he wants. Centralization puts materials at the immediate disposal of students and teachers. It also helps to break down the common practice of restricting certain media for teacher use only. If we really want children to learn all that they are capable of learning, we cannot deny them access to anything that could help them learn.²

With all the media in one department there is a much greater possibility of interrelating them. Users can choose one item or a combination of several. There is also a saving of time spent running from one department to another.

¹Dr. Oliver Rice, "The Role of the Resource Center in the New Learning," Illinois Libraries, 51:457, June, 1969.

²Murray G. Phillips, "Instructional Materials Centers-The Rationale," The Clearing House, 37:20, February, 1963.

CORRELATION WITH CURRICULUM

"Materials serve many different instructional purposes, such as arousing interests, introducing a topic, providing content, developing skills, adding variety to teaching methods, providing means of self-expression."¹ An IMC makes possible greater correlation between media and curriculum. In the past, the materials, particularly the text book, have determined the curriculum rather than implementing it. Teachers are able to consult with the librarians in the media center to coordinate classroom instruction with research that can be done in the center. No longer is the library on the fringes of education; the IMC is in the midst of the action.

FLEXIBILITY

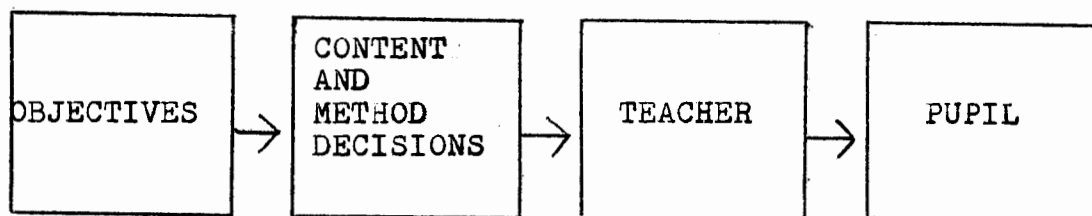
There is flexibility in a media center. If one kind of media doesn't help a student, there are others available to try. Librarians get out into classrooms so that they know what is going on. The loan policies are much more relaxed to encourage use. Equipment can be checked out for home study. It is hoped that eventually the media centers will be able to stay open past regular school hours for use in evenings, on weekends, and during holiday periods. There is a trend away from scheduled class visits so that individuals, small groups, and occasionally, whole classes may come as

¹Frances Kennon Johnson, "Evaluating Some Actual Experiences," Instructor, 74:61, November, 1964.

the need arises. With carrels and listening stations, many activities can be going on at the same time without interfering with each other. The rules and regulations should be set up for the greatest convenience of the users, rather than the old idea of convenience for the library staff.

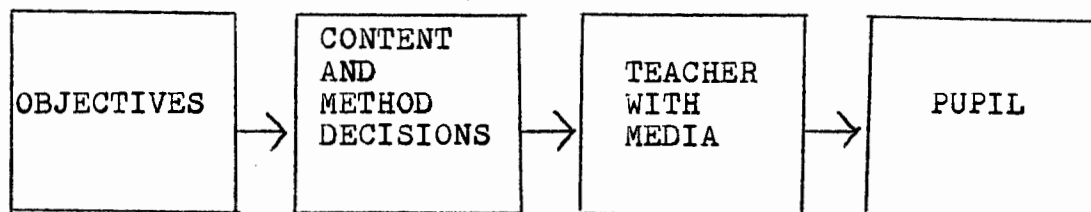
IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTION

In the January, 1963, issue of Audiovisual Instruction an article titled "The Function of Media in the Public School" presents food for thought concerning the different ways media may be utilized in the improvement of instruction. Traditional instruction used only the textbook and the teacher and often followed this pattern:



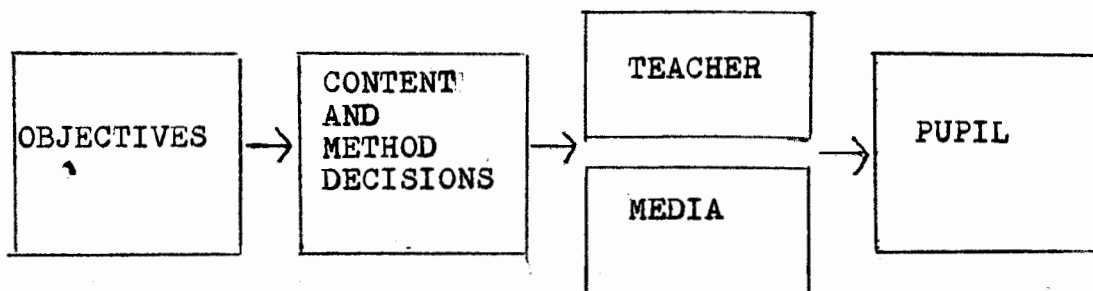
The first function of media is its use to supplement instruction and make the teacher more effective. Learning occurs through direct contact and handling of things.

MEDIA FUNCTION NO. 1

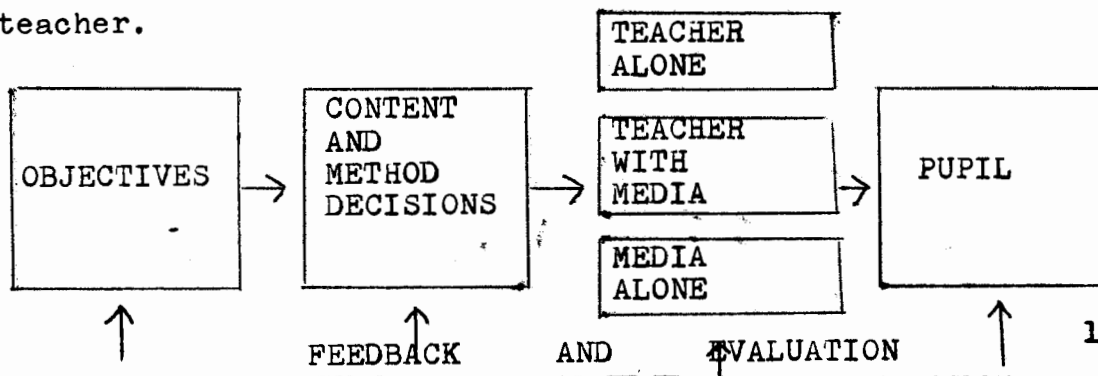


The second way that media can function is that for certain presentations the media replaces the teacher. Objectives and content are still planned by the teacher who also does the evaluation at the end.

MEDIA FUNCTION NO. 2



The newest approach for the use of media involves the use of an instructional system. This will use teacher presentation, discussion, media presentation, programmed instruction. The decision on which ones to use will depend on who and what is going to be taught. This instructional system does not work in all phases of every curriculum. There will be feedback and evaluation by pupils and the teacher.



¹Barry Morris (ed.), "The Function of Media in the Public Schools-A Position Paper," Audiovisual Instruction, 8:11-12, January, 1963.

Section 5

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS AND TEACHERS

NEW ROLES FOR LIBRARIANS

Melnick describes the librarian of the IMC as the "vital operating force of the library, supplying a variety of materials and services to students and teachers. Without this life-giving presence, books would gather dust on the shelves, and tapes, films, and filmstrips lie useless."¹ Librarianship is no job for the faint-hearted. The image of a librarian sitting back in cloistered seclusion, selecting books and cataloging them, is as old-fashioned as high buttoned shoes. Librarians of today must be directly involved in providing meaningful experiences to help children learn. This means work.

The librarian has many roles, some of them new: teacher, storyteller, materials consultant, knowledgeable reader and retrieval expert.² As a teacher she will help provide materials and teach library skills so that children will be successful in their search for material. She will help them to understand that, because there is a wide variety

¹Valerie Melnick, "The Librarian's Role," Theory Into Practice, 6:40, February, 1967.

²Ibid.

of media available, they will want to choose the ones that best suit their purposes in coming to the center. Never before have librarians been so totally involved in helping students to develop good study habits and skills in reading, listening, observing, inquiring, social interaction, self-discipline, self-motivation, and self-evaluation.¹

Through storytelling she can introduce children to books and foster an interest in books that will last throughout a lifetime. "The students of today are the first generation to be dominated by an oral culture since the invention of the printing press."² They are happily and comfortably involved with non-print media and need to be made aware of the wonders found in print too.

Both students and teachers will find the librarian helpful as a materials consultant. She should know what type and the amount of materials that are available on a given subject and for what level of student they would be suitable. A librarian can prepare bibliographies for teachers to use when planning units. She can assist anyone who runs into difficulties in locating material.

If the librarian is to be a helpful materials

¹The American Library Association and the National Education Association, Standards for School Media Programs, (Chicago: American Library Association; Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1969), p.8.

²Nancy Larrick, "Baby Dolls Are Gone," Library Journal, 92:3815, October 15, 1967.

consultant, it will be necessary for her to read widely and preview great quantities of non-print material. Of course, she cannot know everything, but must know how to guide people to the fiction or non fiction books or other media that will help answer their questions. These services provide the educational hub around which the school will move.¹

To provide the effective tools for learning in an easily accessible way, the librarian has to be an expert retriever. Librarians have always needed to keep printed materials organized, but this addition of non-print media presents a new challenge. The way that she organizes the entire library will have great influence on its use. Each school will have different needs as far as organization goes. Some will require all the media for one subject to be stored together. Perhaps this would be done to encourage students to browse in materials they might not ordinarily consider exploring. Other schools may want separate sections for different kinds of media, with everything centrally catalogued.²

¹Jean E. Lowrie, "Education and Training of School Librarians," Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 50:64-65, January, 1966.

²Valerie Melnick, "The Librarian's Role," Theory Into Practice, 6:41-42, February, 1967.

The librarian will need to sell the school library program to most of the teachers. Very little training is given to future teachers at the college level on how to take advantage of a library program. If they do not know how to use the library themselves, how can they be expected to realize how valuable library skills will be for their students? Part of a librarian's job would be to conduct in-service training for teachers individually and in small groups. This could also include instruction on the use of the audiovisual equipment. Teachers, like everyone else, are products of their experiences. If the librarian wants teachers to take advantage of the IMC services, she had better see to it that they are having the right kind of experiences with media. ¹

NEW ROLES FOR TEACHERS

Teaching takes on an entirely different direction when the child is at its center, instead of trying to teach the book from cover to cover. Taking full advantage of a centrally located materials center that is actually part of the instructional program, puts the teacher into many new situations. Anna B. Beachner describes five different roles that a teacher will need to fill in a school with an active instructional materials center.

¹Valerie Melnick, Ibid. p.40.

1. Environmental Designer-With an IMC providing a wide variety of materials to facilitate instruction the teacher is no longer tied to the textbook.
2. Guide and Consultant-When all students aren't working on exactly the same projects within the four walls of the classroom, the teacher has more time to consult with individuals or groups studying together.
3. Team Teacher-The teacher and librarian working together can be a very effective team for planning and actual teaching. The students benefit from this approach and can become very adept in using skills of research.
4. Innovator in Evaluation-Instruction becomes much more flexible when it includes wide use of the materials center. This provides the teacher with a greater range of content and challenges him to come up with some new and better ways of evaluating pupil progress.
5. Expert in Children's Materials-With this close contact with the librarian, the teacher will constantly have his knowledge about the materials for his particular field or grade level being up-dated.¹

All this emphasis on new media and equipment poses a problem for teachers already working in the field. Chances are most of them were so educated to believe that the teacher was the chief dispenser of knowledge to the pupils. Delegating part of this responsibility to media, allowing it to present learning activities, is a threatening, earth shattering idea. What if this media eventually takes over the entire learning situation and teachers will not be needed any more? Some kind of in-service training must be given to these teachers so that they will know how to operate the equipment, produce media on their own, and come to understand the use of media in providing meaningful learning experiences for children.

¹Anna Bertrand Beachner, "The Teacher's Role," Theory Into Practice, 52:37-38, February, 1967.

These new roles also have implications for teacher training institutions. They are going to need to put greater emphasis on the orientation of students to the multi-media concept. Teachers coming out of these schools must have a better idea of how the media center can improve instruction. They need instruction concerning preparation of various kinds of media. This preparation is not so difficult but most teachers will not attempt it without previous experience. This also holds true for the equipment needed to use media. In the study of psychology one learns that if a certain behavior is to become part of a person, he must have an opportunity to practice that behavior and be rewarded. If teachers-to-be receive instruction and have laboratory periods for practice, they will be more comfortable and confident using the equipment available through an IMC.

Section 6

SUMMARY

Davies presents a comparison of a traditional library with an IMC. Elementary school libraries today are in a period of transition:

1. from the library as an auxiliary service to the library as an integral component of the total educational program.
2. from the library as a study hall to the library as an educational force.
3. from the library as a materials distribution center to the library as a learning laboratory.
4. from the library limited to a print collection to a library providing all kinds of instructional media.
5. from the incidental use of library facilities, staff, and collection to the planned, purposeful and educationally-significant use of library facilities, staff, and collection.
6. from the librarian serving as a study hall monitor to the librarian serving as an educator.
7. from the librarian as a curator of books to the librarian programming for the most effective and educationally rewarding use of all types and kinds of instructional media.
8. from the librarian as an impersonal dispenser of material to the librarian as a learning expediter personalizing the services of the library.
9. from the librarian working in isolation to the librarian serving as a cooperating and/or team teacher.
10. from the librarian working incommunicado to the librarian directly involved in curriculum planning.¹

¹Ruth Ann Davies, The School Library, (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1969), p.23.

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