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What is a School Librarian? Towards Defining Professionalism

Ken Haycock



At the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian School Library Association in Edmonton in June, 1978 a motion was passed to the effect that the C.S.L.A. define a "Qualified school librarian". Subsequently, a committee on qualifications was established to report to the Executive Council of the Association. This Committee was chaired by Ken Haycock who is Coordinator of Library Services and a Supervisor of Instruction with the Vancouver School Board and included both elementary and secondary school librarians. All Committee members have faculty of education courses in school librarianship/media services and half also hold accredited library degrees.

The Committee consulted a variety of sources listed in the selected bibliography but the basis of the first draft was primarily a document on minimum qualifications for school librarians developed by the Vancouver Chapter of the British Columbia School Librarian's Association in consulta-

tion with the Vancouver School Board Coordinator of Library Services; this document was adopted by the Vancouver School Board on March 2, 1979. The Vancouver Chapter granted permission to use their work as a basis for a national report. Several revisions were made in the course of the development of this report and it was revised further for the purposes of the Canadian School Library Association.

Since the Committee was local in composition and since the document could be important for school librarianship in Canada a "reactor panel" of 75 leaders in the field in Canada was selected. Invitations were sent to all provincial supervisors, all instructors in school librarianship in Faculties of Education and Library Science, all deans of library schools, all presidents of provincial school library associations and a representative sample of personnel at the school and district levels. Approximately one-third of those invited to serve as reactors were elementary and secondary

school librarians, one-third were library educators and one-third were district coordinators/supervisors.

All reactors were invited to involve their colleagues in the review process with the result that one hundred and fifty reactors offered more than two hundred and fifty pages of reaction to the draft document. The breakdown of the reactor panel by province is as follows:

PROVINCE	INVITED	ACTUAL
British Columbia	15	40
Alberta	12	12
Saskatchewan	5	5
Manitoba	6	31
Ontario	20	45
Quebec	3	2
New Brunswick	2	1
Nova Scotia	6	10
Prince Edward Island	3	1
Newfoundland	3	3
TOTAL	75	150

Substantial revision was made as a result of this feedback.

Criticisms and/or recommendations from reactors were dealt with in detail and at

length. Each committee member received copies of all correspondence from reactors and areas of agreement and disagreement noted.

There was strong and near unanimous support for teaching qualifications and experience, specialized advanced education in school librarianship and professionalism and leadership. Areas of disagreement among reactors provided a useful overview of issues in school librarianship today and these will be explored in future issues of *EL*. It would be fair to say that the final report has the general and specific support of leaders in school librarianship across Canada.

The committee report was introduced to the general membership of the Canadian School Library Association at a presentation at the annual conference in Ottawa on June 15, 1979. Participants had an opportunity to make their views known to individual members of the Executive Council of C.S.L.A. following that session; all comments were favourable. At the Annual General Meeting on June 17 members requested that this document be approved as soon as possible. Only one delegate (from Nova Scotia) voiced any reservations, and this was about the well-documented need for a teaching certificate for school librarians. On June 18, 1979 the report was accepted and endorsed by the Executive Council of the C.S.L.A. and recommended as a high priority for wide dissemination.

THE CANADIAN SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION STATEMENT ON QUALIFICATIONS FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

(approved by the Canadian School Library Association on June 18, 1979)

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INTRODUCTION

During the past two decades, our schools have been struggling to adapt to the changing needs of society. What has emerged is an institution which focuses on the development of individuals who are prepared to think rationally and logically for themselves and to assume responsibilities. To develop students of this type has meant that schools have had to emphasize learner-oriented methods such as guided discovery and inquiry as well as traditional teacher-oriented methods.

This broadening of educational methodology has had a great impact on school libraries. Many school librarians have been leaders in understanding and focusing on the expanding variety of teaching approaches and student experiences which the changing needs of society require. It is fact, however, that the inclusion of inquiry, individualization and independent study programs has placed many additional demands on the library and on the librarian. The need today is for the *learning resource teacher* to be a highly skilled teacher, able to function on the school team as a professional with competencies from teacher education and classroom experience as well as competencies from school librarianship and media services. Similarly, the library has moved from being a subject and merely a place to a service and a concept, a *learning resource centre* for teachers and students. We attempt to identify those competencies which are essential to the success of a learning resource teacher. In each case competencies are listed and have been developed and defined through multiple indicators of quality.

Expectations for learning resource teachers are very high. It is expected that a learning resource teacher will be in the forefront of curriculum and professional development services, will be familiar with the full range of instructional strategies and learning styles, will be able to organize time, personnel and materials to

maximize utilization of each and will be active in professional concerns within the school and the district.

For the learning resource teacher to achieve these expectations, adequate support staff is essential to free the professional from clerical and technical tasks. School districts must recognize this need if the potential of the learning resource teacher and resource centre is to be realized.

It should be noted that successful completion of formal course work will not guarantee success as a learning resource teacher. Personality factors, interpersonal relations skills, creativity, flexibility, professional commitment, and willingness to participate in continuing education, should be major factors in evaluating a learning resource teacher.

Recent advances in education make it essential that the learning resource teacher demonstrate the competencies outlined if the resource centre is to offer an educational service which is vital to the school's instructional program.

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Although learning resource teachers have competence in the areas listed, services are offered on the basis of the school program and the availability of personnel, materials and facilities. Priorities are determined by the individual school since not all services will be offered in every school or to the same extent in all schools. Different approaches to evaluation are available to administrators, school staffs and learning resource teachers and several of these are outlined in the Winter, 1974 issue (Volume 17, Number 2) of *Moccasin Telegraph*, the journal of the Canadian School Library Association.

1. **Competency: Administration of the Learning Resource Program**
Administration includes the ability to manage resource centre programs, services and staff in order that these services may contribute to the stated educational goals of the school.

Indicators of Competence:

The learning resource teacher is able to:

1. Establish rapport with school staff, students and community.
 2. Establish short and long range goals in terms of district guidelines and school objectives.
 3. Select, supervise and plan for the effective use of resource centre professional and support staff.
 4. Recruit, select, train and motivate adult and student volunteers.
 5. Invite and accept suggestions from teaching staff about the services the program provides.
 6. Develop resource centre facilities to support the objectives of the instructional program.
 7. Plan for efficient use of space and equipment and for appropriate security for learning resources.
 8. Plan and manage a flexible budget which reflects the instructional program.
 9. Organize and develop staff, collections, budget, facilities and services to achieve objectives.
 10. Maintain an inventory of materials and equipment.
 11. Prepare oral and written reports on the resource centre program.
 12. Provide an environment conducive to learning.
 13. Apply technological advances such as automation to resource centre services.
 14. Involve school staff in the evaluation of the effectiveness of resource centre program in terms of district guidelines and school objectives.
- 2. Competency: Selection of Learning Resources**
The selection of learning resources includes the ability to apply basic principles of evaluating learning resources for the purpose of developing a collection which will support the instructional program in the school.

Indicators of Competence:

The learning resources teacher is

able to:

1. Develop and implement criteria for the evaluation and selection of a wide range of resources.
 2. Develop policies and procedures for the selection of learning resources which meet curricular informational and recreational needs.
 3. Build a collection of bibliographic and evaluative sources to provide current information about learning resources and equipment.
 4. Organize teacher involvement in the preview, evaluation and selection of learning resources.
 5. Develop extensive "consideration for purchase" files of book and nonbook media.
- 3. Competency: Acquisition, Organization and Circulation of Learning Resources**
The acquisition, organization and circulation of learning resources includes the professional tasks of classifying and cataloguing information and of organizing circulation procedures and the *supervision* of efficient and systematic technical and clerical support services.
- Indicators of Competence*
The learning resource teacher performs, organizes systems and/or deploys trained assistants to:
1. Implement procedures for ordering, receiving and processing learning resources.
 2. Classify and catalogue learning resources as necessary and according to accepted standards.
 3. Maintain an accurate catalogue according to established rules.
 4. Develop an efficient system for lending, renewing, reserving and recalling needed learning resources and equipment.
 5. Route curriculum resources and professional materials.
 6. Establish procedures for, and encourage the use of, inter-library loans.
 7. Select commercial cataloguing services appropriate to school needs.
- 4. Competency: Reading, Listening and Viewing Guidance**

Guidance in reading, listening and viewing includes the ability to assess student needs and interests and to provide resources which satisfy a given situation. Through this guidance students develop attitudes, appreciations and skills that motivate and stimulate the improved selection of appropriate learning resources.

Indicators of Competence:

The learning resource teacher is able to:

1. Work with individuals and groups of students to provide direction, improve selection, and develop critical thinking.
 2. Provide guidance for students and teachers during the school day and before and after school.
 3. Share with students and teachers the joy of reading.
 4. Promote appreciation and interest in the use of learning resources by giving book/media talks.
 5. Develop storytelling, story-reading and other resource-centered programs for language development.
 6. Assist students and teachers in the effective use of media.
 7. Recommend to teachers learning resources in various formats which may assist in the accomplishment of specific learning objectives.
 8. Advise teachers of medium appropriateness for particular instructional purposes.
- 5. Competency: Design and Production of Learning Resources**
The design and production of learning resources includes the ability to plan, design and produce materials for a specific instructional purpose, such as to improve communication effectiveness skills where appropriate commercial materials are not available.
- Indicators of Competence*
The learning resource teacher is able to:
1. Advise students and teachers in media design and production through instruction and in-

service programs.

2. Supervise the production of materials such as cassettes, slides, transparencies, talking books, video and slide/tape presentations.
3. Assist in the evaluation of media produced.

6. Competency: Information and Reference Services

Information services include the ability to use reference materials in seeking answers to questions. The learning resource teacher also acts as a liaison between the resource centre/school and outside agencies for information services and resources.

Indicators of Competence:

The learning resource teacher is able to:

1. Answer, or obtain answers to, questions from teachers and students.
2. Provide guidance to teachers and students on locating information.
3. Develop a working relationship with public libraries, specialized libraries, other resource centres, community organizations, resource people and district resource services.
4. Locate specific information and resources found outside the school.
5. Participate in cooperative and coordinated projects within the district which involve the sharing of ideas, experiences and learning resources.

7. Competency: Promotion of the Effective Use of Learning Resources and Services

The promotion of the effective use of learning resources and services includes the ability to alert users to the full range of available resources.

Indicators of Competence:

The learning resource teacher is able to:

1. Communicate effectively with teachers and administrators.
2. Develop an informational and public relations program for staff, students and the community.

3. Capitalize on themes through special promotions and media celebrations.
4. Develop bulletin boards, displays, and other publicity materials.

8. Competency: Cooperative Program Planning and Teaching

Cooperative program planning and teaching include the ability to participate as a teaching partner in the accomplishment of identified learning objectives through a knowledge of recommended resources and appropriate teaching/learning strategies.

Indicators of Competence:

The learning resource teacher is able to:

1. Develop cooperatively with teachers a sequential list of media, research and study skills for cross-grade and cross-subject implementation.
2. Plan and develop units of work with teachers from the setting of objectives to evaluation.
3. Integrate media, research and study skills with classroom instruction for independent and continued learning.
4. Pre-plan with teachers and teach skills integrated with classroom instruction to large and small groups and individuals.
5. Integrate the planned use of learning resources with the educational program.
6. Provide leadership to develop programs which integrate the promotion of reading with the total school program and with individual teacher programs.
7. Initiate specific teaching units to encourage the acquisition of skills and the effective use of learning resources.
8. Provide curriculum-related book and nonbook media talks and celebrations.
9. Compile bibliographies, resource lists and book and non-book media lists as needed.

9. Competency: Professionalism and Leadership

Professionalism and leadership include the ability to develop and

promote the use of the human and material resources of the school resource centre and its facilities through cooperative professional activities.

Indicators of Competence:

The learning resource teacher is able to:

1. Develop a strong team approach with other teachers.
2. Lead in-service education programs on the effective use of the resource centre: criteria for selection of materials; designing resource-based units of study; using audio-visual equipment; promoting voluntary reading; media, research and study skill development; cooperative teaching; community resources.
3. Share techniques and strategies for using learning resources.
4. Involve students and staff in establishing learning resources policy and service guidelines.
5. Plan strategies for developing, presenting and securing support for learning resource services.
6. Serve on local and district curriculum committees.
7. Keep abreast of current developments in school librarianship, library and information science, media services and related fields.
8. Participate in the school's educational program by serving on advisory groups and committees and working with the student extra-curricular program.
9. Take advantage of opportunities for continuing education and professional development.
10. Apply specific research findings and the principles of research to the development and improvement of resource centre services.
11. Maintain membership and participate in professional education and library associations at the local, provincial and national levels.

Guiding Principles for Education for School Librarianship

Although there is little consistency in provincial requirements for learning resource teachers, the Canadian School Library Association believes that programs for the education of learning resource teachers should reflect the areas of competence outlined. Further, the following basic principles should form the foundation for formal education programs:

- a valid teaching certificate and successful classroom teaching experience should be required of all candidates prior to entry
- programs should be offered at the post-baccalaureate and/or graduate levels only
- courses should reflect the general framework of teaching and learning in elementary and secondary schools
- programs should reflect an integrated approach to "library" and "audio-visual" services
- programs should be a minimum of one academic year or equivalent
- access to programs should be improved through part-time and summer session study and continuing education opportunities.

New and revised programs for the education of learning resource teachers should be based on required competencies. These programs and provincial requirements should be developed as soon as possible by agencies involved in education for school librarianship in consultation with the appropriate professional associations.

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