

Review Articles

Core of Education for Librarianship

The Core of Education for Librarianship.

A Report of a Workshop held under the auspices of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago, August 10-15, 1953. Ed. by Lester Asheim. Chicago, American Library Association, 1954. 68p. planographed. \$1.50.

During the years, roughly, between 1946 and 1950 the faculty of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago addressed itself seriously to the problem of the core curriculum, and even made some considerable progress in defining the "core" and developing in fairly precise terms its course content. Thus the announcement, in the late winter of 1953, that the School would sponsor a workshop, at the University of Chicago, on "The Core of Education for Librarianship" came as a distinct surprise to many who, because of the general acceptance in principle of this "core concept" by most of the library schools, had begun to regard the idea of the "core" as no longer a particularly timely topic for discussion.

But whatever the reasons that lay behind the promotion of the Workshop, the dean of the Graduate Library School invited some sixty individuals, representing a wide variety of professional library activities, including many engaged in library education, to a five-day discussion period, to consider "whether the core concept has validity for library education and if so, what the content of such a core should be." (p.i) The group assembled in Ida Noyes Hall from August 10 to 14, 1953. They did not reconvene on Saturday, the 15th, as had originally been planned. Prior to the opening of the Workshop, each registrant was "sent a packet of informational materials pertinent to the specific area of his interest. These materials contained summaries of statistical data and other factual information from a variety of published sources. The data had no official status in the Workshop but were provided as background information which participants would have in common. It was possible, through

this procedure, to devote the entire period of the Workshop to a discussion of the central problem without having to divert time to the gathering of extant facts and findings on which the discussions could be based." (p.ii) These materials were sent to the registrants only after each had indicated "the area in which [his] major interest lay and [was] assigned to the committee which could most fruitfully utilize [his] experience and interests." (p.ii.)

The opening day of the Workshop was spent in plenary session, at which time the participants defined the "core" as "that part of the total curriculum which *must be mastered by everyone*, no matter what specialization he aims for, or at what level it is taught." (p.i.) During this first day the Workshop also considered the definition of a profession, and concluded by accepting that of Ralph Tyler, who identifies two major attributes of a profession: (a) the "existence of a recognized code of ethics," and (b) the possession of a "body of principles," upon which its techniques of operation are based. (p.3) In presenting the results of this first day of deliberation the author of the summary report here reviewed is careful to point out that "the Workshop was established without preconceptions [respecting the existence of a core]. Its objective was not to prove that a core exists, but to determine whether a core exists or not." (p.1) But the group soon discovered that, if it accepted the definition of Tyler, it must either accept the existence of a core of common theoretical knowledge, or reject professional status for librarians. (pp.4-5)

Having completed its preliminary work, the Workshop dispersed into five separate "committees," the personnel of which had been determined in advance according to the particular interests of the registrants. These Committees were denominated, respectively:

1. Library Training at the Undergraduate Level
2. Library Training at the Graduate Level
3. Training for Library Work with Children and Young People
4. Training for Librarianship in Special Subject Fields

5. Training for General Library Practice.

The Committees varied in size from nine to seventeen, the largest being that for Work with Children and Young People, and the smallest, strangely enough, being that concerned with General Library Practice. The task assigned to each was to "define the core content in terms of its own particular problems." (p.9)

When the Workshop reconvened in plenary session it was discovered that there was relatively complete agreement among the five Committees on the identification of seven "core areas," viz: (1) The Library and Society, (2) Professionalism, (3) Materials, (4) Services, (5) Administration, (6) Communication, and (7) Research. But the descriptions of these areas were found "to be so general as to be meaningless for any curriculum planners who might wish to refer to the Workshop recommendations for guidance." (p.14) Therefore, to save its deliberations from complete vacuity, the Workshop voted to reconstitute completely its committee structure to "represent" each of the core areas (plus a Committee on Implementation to recommend overall method, and a Drafting Committee) in order to state in more specific terms what the content of these areas should cover." (p.14)

The recommendations which were finally approved by the Workshop at its concluding plenary session are summarized in the last chapter of this report, and are here presented in outline:

- I. The Study of the Library and Society, and their Relationship to Each Other
 - a. Social institutions of which the library is one
 - b. Kind of society which gives rise to the library as a social institution
 - c. Functions of the library in society
 - d. Community basis of origin and support of libraries
 - e. Interrelationship of libraries to other forces and agencies in the community
 - f. Social problems and trends affecting the library
 - g. The library as a dynamic force in a democracy
 - h. Position of library science among the social sciences
- II. The Meaning and Characteristics of Professionalism
 - a. The character of a profession, based upon the Tyler definition

- b. The comparison of librarianship with other professions
 - c. The librarian's professional responsibilities
- III. The Interpretation, Appreciation, Evaluation, Selection, and Use of Books, Materials, and Sources
 - a. Organization and operation of the book trade
 - b. Principles and practices in the evaluation and selection of materials, and methods of building a collection for a given group of users
 - c. Knowledge and judgment in the use of the basic bibliographic and reference tools in book and non-book materials
 - d. Interpretation of library materials to the end of helping the user
 - e. Overview of standard and current books in subject fields, suitable for readers at all levels
 - f. An awareness and an appreciation of the various types of non-book materials
 - IV. The Organization and Characteristics of Internal and External Library Services in Relation to the Users of the Services
 - a. Acquisition
 - b. Organization of material
 - c. Circulation
 - d. Reference Service
 - e. Audio-visual Services
 - f. Group services and services to individuals
 - V. The Basic Principles and Various Patterns of Library Organization and Management
 - a. General principles of organization and management
 - b. Patterns of library organization and management
 - c. Relationships of the library to the larger organization of which it usually is a part
 - d. Planning, housing, and equipping library services
 - e. Personnel management
 - f. Evaluation of library procedures and services
 - g. Financing and budgeting
 - h. Public relations
 - VI. An Introduction to the Characteristics and Functions of the Communication Process throughout History and in the Present. (There are no sub-headings here because, as originally approved, these related mainly to *mass* communication, until Margaret Egan rescued the workshop from its own confusion (pp.27-29).)

(It is unfortunate that the process of clarification, initiated by Miss Egan, was not carried further, for the exact nature of the library's relation to the communication process is the key to interpretation of the library's function in society. This should have been the starting point for the entire discussion, but the point was allowed to drop as though it were a minor quibble over words.)

VII. An Introduction to the Functions and Methods of Research, and the Use of Research Findings

(This was elaborated to mean that "individual library education programs *may* include . . . research studies," despite the protest of Stanley West that *should* should be substituted for *may* (p.30).)

The Committee on Implementation urged that increased attention be given to improving the selection of students qualifying for admission to the library schools; that criteria for the selection of library school teachers should be established; that the core program should be carefully integrated with existing courses, and that survey courses should be kept at a minimum; and that the work of the library schools should be integrated with the colleges or universities of which they are a part. (pp.31-33)

The author of this report is careful to point out that the seven headings listed above "are not course titles but descriptions of content areas which shall represent one-fifth of a minimum five-year program at the college level and beyond." (p.52) Also from the beginning, the Workshop had defined as being beyond its province any consideration of "specifics of teaching method, course sequence and comparative time spent on the several aspects of the recommended content." (p.52)

Finally, this report concludes with an appendix which lists over twenty characteristics "expected of the librarian as a professional person." (pp.67-68) One would like to quote them all, but space limitations necessitate selection:

Integrity

Wholesome respect for other people

Persistent effort to understand people

Natural talent and aptitude for working with people

A joy in mental life and activity

Librarianship is part of character

Work is not a daily chore etc., etc.

One really must see this list to believe it!

Throughout the text, too, there are statements which, perhaps because they have been lifted from the context of the original discussion, are difficult to interpret. Thus one reads, on page 14, "that most thesis research is of no value for librarians" and again, "that most librarians are not actually called upon to evaluate research." One wonders how any professional person can, today, read his own professional literature without being compelled to evaluate in some fashion the results of those investigations into the nature and characteristics of the field he is supposed to serve.

Even more puzzling is the statement on page 41, attributed to Howard Winger, "Employers want people who have had practice in cataloging; they don't care about the philosophy of it. The University of Chicago has had a course in the philosophy of cataloging, but this was regarded by the field as ridiculous." The Graduate Library School, to the knowledge of this reviewer, has never offered a course in "the philosophy of cataloging." To be sure, it has offered a research seminar in the theory of classification, but this was restricted entirely to advanced students at the level of the doctorate, and was never thought as a segment of the "core." This is, incidentally, the only mention anywhere in the report of any part of the doctoral program, even discussion of advanced training at the intermediate level having been held to a minimum. But since the remark was allowed to stand the reviewer, who formerly taught the seminar in theory of classification, might point out that the purpose of the doctoral program, and therefore its appropriate content and method, differs sharply from that of the core curriculum. One is not simply more of the other, and certainly not more "practice in cataloging." The two programs are—or should be—functionally related and the failure to perceive the nature of this relationship accounts for much of the profession's educational frustration, including that over the problem of research, as noted above. Surely, too, Mr. Winger can distinguish between *cataloging* and *classification*, which again are related but different processes. That the dean of students, who made this inaccurate and irrelevant remark, and the dean of the Graduate Library School, who let

it slip into the final report, could be so confused about both subject and level seems incomprehensible, but there it stands.

Viewed in retrospect, one cannot escape the conclusion that the areas identified in this report as being essential to the "core" are, in the main, the traditional subjects, enriched, perhaps, by a ubiquitous obedience to "principles" or "theory" as opposed to practice or technique. It seems not to have occurred to the participants of the Workshop that such principles must be *derived* either from current library practice, or from research, and that if a basic core of theoretical knowledge common to all librarianship is to be identified these are the only sources for its derivation. Thus one is still left with little more than technological or managerial instruction—raised to a slightly less mechanical level, to be sure, but still not truly professional. Obviously the professionalism of librarianship, if it exists (and this reviewer is quite convinced that it does) must be sought in other ways.

Furthermore, it is to be doubted whether any director of any library school in this country can look at these outlines of the core and not exclaim, "This is exactly what we have been teaching all the time!" In fact the author of this report admits this when, in his concluding chapter, he says, "None of these recommendations represents a particularly new or startling proposal. . . . Most of them have been voiced at one time or another by students of the field." (p.53) He does feel, however, that "The importance of the Workshop recommendations is that they represent a consensus of both practicing librarians and educators, and that they are no longer seen as interesting statements of theory but as accepted guides to practice. They represent, in a sense the signal to the schools that curriculum changes which, in the past, have seemed to be too idealistic for acceptance by the field, will be welcomed by the field." (p.41)

This failure of the Workshop to produce the results expected of it, may be attributed to a variety of factors:

1. Basically the plan of procedure that underlay the Workshop was unrealistic. One does not solve the complex and vexing problems of education, either for librarianship or any other form of human activity, by collective endeavor limited to five days of deli-

beration. The great advances in educational theory have not come through group discussion however "democratic" this may appear to be. On the contrary, progress has been the product of *individual* effort, over long periods of time, a product derived from the intense mental concentration of a rich and fertile brain, and executed in the quiet confines of the private study. Progress in education has not come through legislative enactment and the vote of the majority, yet "Each report was discussed by the group as a whole and was accepted, by vote, to represent the thinking of the Workshop participants." (p.34) That American education is no worse than it is is largely due to a life-time of individual labor by a Henry Barnard, a Horace Mann, a John Dewey, a Robert Maynard Hutchins.

2. At many points the Workshop seemed to lack focus and adequate leadership. That may have been due, in part, to a conscious effort by the sponsors to avoid predisposing the participants to any predetermined philosophy, point of view, or method of procedure. But whatever the explanation, one is often reminded of the classical remark by which Louis Round Wilson once abruptly terminated a fruitless argument in his course in "Library Trends," "I think this discussion is getting nowhere and if you fellows think it is, I think you're mistaken!" One wishes many times that "L. R. W." had been there.

3. By accepting, without much question, the general belief that the possession of a common body of theoretical knowledge is the most important single attribute of a profession, the Workshop, either consciously or unconsciously, based its deliberations on the simple logical proposition:

A profession has a common body of theoretical knowledge

Librarianship is a profession

Therefore, Librarianship must have a common body of theoretical knowledge.

Or, as the author of this report expresses it, "accept a core or reject professional status." (p.4) The alternative to "love me, love my dog," was one which the Workshop, quite obviously, was unwilling to accept, and thus the outcome of its deliberations was fore-ordained from the start. Adherence to the "core idea," then was not derived from any inherent characteristics of library practice,

but from an intense desire on the part of the personnel of the Workshop to "be professional."

4. The time-span of only five days was much too limited to permit the adequate formulation of concepts and principles of the magnitude here considered.

5. The concept of the sponsors regarding the relation of professional practice to educational theory was in error. The function of education is not to *follow* but to *lead*. Admittedly the educator would be well advised to submit his "findings" to the profession, at frequent intervals, for criticism and evaluation, but the basic responsibility for educational advance is his alone. That the Graduate Library School, under the leadership of Wilson, Waples, Joeckel, Butler, Randall, Carnovsky, and their immediate successors, achieved such marked success is largely to be attributed to the fact that it knew very well what it was about. It was quite self-sufficient; it felt no need to ask the profession which way progress lay; and it relentlessly and uncompromisingly blazed its own trail through the tangled wilderness of uncertainty and doubt, a trail that the profession soon wore into a well-beaten path.

But to this reviewer the most disturbing result of the Workshop was its insistence that at least a portion of the "core" be taught at the undergraduate level, and that "students who have had this undergraduate training in library subjects be permitted to demonstrate their mastery of 'duplicated' course content through examination rather than through having to retake courses with similar titles and content." (p.35) In vain LeRoy Merritt and William Williamson argued that such a recommendation would dilute the basic general education of graduate students; that, though it would be recognized as inadequate library training, it would be terminal in many instances; that graduates of such a program would often find themselves in truly professional positions. (p.36) To these arguments they might have added, that it would tend to obliterate the much too indistinct lines of demarcation between professional and sub-professional and between subprofessional and clerical workers; that it would complicate still further the confused pattern of degree structure; that it would raise a variety of difficult problems respecting state and muni-

cipal certification; that it would support a trend that the library schools have been struggling to oppose; that it is tacit admission that the "core" curriculum is not really "professional" after all; and that it would threaten to set library education back almost to the days before the Williamson report. "The majority felt, however, that some undergraduate work is acceptable . . . based on a realistic appraisal of supply and demand . . . and it is therefore better to offer the best training possible under the circumstances, recognizing that it is not ideal." (pp.36-37)

Hard on the heels of this report comes the announcement by the College of the University of Chicago that it will henceforth offer the traditional four-year baccalaureate degree with a year of undergraduate training in librarianship, to be administered by the faculty of the Graduate Library School. Thus one-fourth of the undergraduate courses of study will be devoted to library training, whereas even the Workshop recommended a maximum of 15 to 18 hours. How quickly the forces of deterioration have been set in motion! Thus has the Graduate Library School abrogated its original mandate from the Carnegie Corporation to prosecute "research, defined as 'extending the existing body of factual knowledge concerning the values and procedures of libraries . . . including the development of methods of investigation whereby significant data are obtained, tested, and applied' . . . and to leave to other library schools . . . the responsibility for passing on to their students a body of principles and practices that have been found useful in the conduct of libraries."¹ An Undergraduate Library School, this is the once-proud "G. L. S." at mid-century—*sic transit gloria!*—Jesse H. Shera, *School of Library Science, Western Reserve University.*

International Book Production

Grundriss des Buchhandels in aller Welt.

By Sigfred Taubert. Hamburg, E. Hauswedell, 1953. 351p. DM 20.

The literature on international book production and the flow of printed materials

¹ Waples, Douglas, "The Graduate Library School of Chicago," *Library Quarterly*, 1:26-27, January, 1931.