

Implementing the Junior College Library Standards

By NORMAN E. TANIS

IMPLEMENTATION of the Junior College Library Standards is one of the important tasks facing junior college librarians, administrators, and instructors in the 1960's. Even as the members of the ACRL Committee on Standards were finishing their work at the ALA Mid-winter meeting in January 1960, they realized that completed standards are only a beginning, that the most difficult task still remains: implementing the Standards. A rigorous self-study of each junior college library, using the new Standards as a guide, is perhaps the most workable method toward accomplishing this.

Due to the complex nature of the American junior college, a relatively new and strictly twentieth-century phenomenon, many difficulties in effecting application of the Standards confront librarians. Most crucial among these are the bewildering diversity of junior colleges, their changing role in modern American society, and their rapid growth due to burgeoning enrollments with its concomitant problem of insufficient finances.

There is tremendous diversity in the number and type of programs and in the kinds of students in American junior colleges. While some of the junior colleges and community colleges offer only the first two years of the liberal arts program, others provide also terminal technical and apprenticeship training, preparation for business and management, nursing programs, and an astounding range of adult education courses. This wide range of curricula is designed to meet the differing preparation, aims, and abilities of varying student bodies. As to

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preparation, while most junior college students have completed high school, others have not and may be enrolled in vocational programs or in non-credit adult education courses, while still others may have completed some or all of their college training and are taking additional courses. As to differing aims, most junior college students are trying to earn college credits, but some are taking courses to enhance their earning abilities or to improve their chances for advancement in their work, and still others are enrolled in adult education courses for the general intellectual stimulation and broadening. Obviously, along with the wide differences in preparation and aims, there is also a broad range of ability among junior college students. All this diversity contributes to the difficulties of putting the Standards into practice.

Implementation of the *ALA Standards for Junior College Libraries* is made additionally difficult because of the changing role of American junior colleges, the result of added and increasingly complex obligations thrust upon them. Today these two-year institutions are expected not only to provide the first two years of training in the liberal arts but also to train skilled technicians for a complicated and changing technology, as well as to offer general and specialized adult education courses to a far wider range of students than previously. Curricular changes are swift; new courses

spring up like the spring grasses and sometimes die in the summer heat.

Attempting to put these Standards into action becomes more complex because of the recent rapid growth of the junior college movement. Existing junior colleges have been forced to expand due to expanding enrollments, and there has been constant pressure to create new junior colleges. In only the last twenty years a total of 102 new junior colleges, now enrolling 708,352 students, were built in the United States. An example of this rapid growth is that of the junior colleges in New York State where sixteen publicly supported junior colleges have been organized in the last ten years. But the greatest growth has occurred in California junior colleges, which enrolled fully 73.3 per cent of all full-time freshmen and sophomore students in public colleges and universities.

In implementing the Junior College Library Standards, librarians must face also the problem of finances. The very rapidity of the growth of junior colleges has resulted in some substandard libraries. Concerned with furnishing an inexpensive education to the youth of a community, junior college administrators have all too often equated learning with classroom teaching only and have neglected the importance of adequate libraries. In some instances, junior colleges have gone into operation with a library of only a few thousand books donated by interested persons in the community. Even more frequently, a junior college library has started as an adjunct to an existing high school library. Later, when the junior college moved to its own site, a pitifully small number of books accompanied the move. The lack of adequate financing has often resulted also in inadequate housing of junior college libraries. Too often they have been located in converted classrooms, closed-off hallways, or dark basements. Such libraries have served as little more than study rooms.

Although there will undoubtedly be difficulties in putting the new Junior College Library Standards into practice, there is surely no doubt that a pressing and immediate need for such criteria does exist. Every junior college librarian needs the Standards to bolster his position when interpreting library needs to college administrators. Because of the diversity of American junior colleges and the differing programs they offer, it was impossible, if indeed it was even desirable, to construct quantitative standards which would exactly fit each library. The ACRL Committee on Standards therefore formulated the quantitative standards so that each librarian can adapt them to his particular institution. The Standards themselves make the point that one very good way to measure the adequacy of a library collection is to compare it with the reported holdings of junior colleges of established excellence with roughly similar curricula and enrollments.

Qualitative statements, however, make up the bulk of the Standards. They too must be interpreted to the administrators and instructors of each institution. Such a task entails understanding of the individual institution and its library needs.

THE SELF-STUDY AS A MEANS OF IMPLEMENTING THE STANDARDS

The institutional self-study has served a useful purpose in American higher education and, no doubt, reflects colleges' awareness that times change and that curricula and philosophies must reflect this change. The kind of self-study I here recommend for each junior and community college would be limited to its library, considering, however, the aims and programs of the institution it serves and their effect on the library. While national as well as state and sectional meetings of librarians will undoubtedly discuss the Junior College Library Standards, these meetings will

be no substitute for the careful, intelligent efforts of individual librarians measuring their libraries against the new Standards.

The self-study of an individual junior college library should be conducted by the librarian in conjunction with his faculty or with some kind of faculty-library committee. Using the quantitative and qualitative Junior College Library Standards, the study should focus on such matters as the book collection, the library budget, organization, personnel, and the library building. This kind of study should consider as its central question: "How does our college library measure up to the Standards and how can any deficiencies be remedied?"

Such a study can be a major step toward accomplishing several important and beneficial results. It will furnish detailed data to faculty and administrators, thereby providing a concrete basis for increasing library support from the governing body of the junior college. A self-study can also encourage and stimulate the faculty to active participation in building an adequate library collection. The library's aims and objectives will become explicitly stated and understood, as a result of the study. Finally, the self-study will dramatize to faculty and administrators the necessity for immediate action if the library is to serve its functions of furnishing curricular resources, encouraging the intellectual stimulation of students and faculty, and introducing students to the intellectual heritage from the past. Above all, the survey must produce more than a resounding committee report which can be routinely commended and then easily pigeonholed. It must produce the concrete action of dollars-and-cents spending to build a better and more comprehensive library collection, housed in a carefully designed building or set of rooms.

PLANNING THE LIBRARY SELF-STUDY

To ensure its success, the self-study

must be carefully conducted in order to bring about an institutional climate sympathetic to, and ready for, changes in the library. First, it is important to obtain from the administrators and trustees of the institution genuine and continuous support for the study. Also desirable for the success of the study is broad participation in it by not only administrators but also faculty and student body. If possible, alumni of the college should also be included.

After securing a favorable institutional climate, the librarian and others involved in the study should decide upon major areas of the library to be examined. A useful outline from which to proceed can be found in the eight divisions of the *ALA Standards for Junior College Libraries*: (1) Functions of the Junior College Library, (2) Structure and Government, (3) Budget, (4) Staff, (5) The Library Collection, (6) Building, (7) The Quality of the Service and Its Evaluation, and (8) Inter-library Cooperation.

Doubtless, every library will find some deficiencies when measured against the Standards. Weaknesses should be carefully noted and summarized in a general report. Deficiencies of space, books, staff, and budget (to cite just a few of the many possible ones) will provide the concrete data necessary for the final step toward implementing the Standards—the correction of these deficiencies.

DISSEMINATING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Once the recommendations resulting from the self-study have been drawn, the next step is to bring them to the attention of the junior college faculty and administration. The report will most probably first be presented to the library committee. Then, the recommendations of the study committee, together with any additional recommendations of the library committee, will in most cases be submitted to the entire faculty during one of its meetings. Undoubtedly, there

will be enough material in the self-study to necessitate several faculty meetings in order to provide ample opportunity for discussion.

Finally, the summary of the study committee's findings can be submitted to the junior college administrators. This summary should cite costs for correcting the weaknesses discovered by the survey. After thorough study, the appropriate administrators, in turn, can send the library study report to the college's trustees or, in the case of the publicly-supported junior college connected with a school district, to the superintendent and then to the board of education.

The library study is not complete and permanent once the study committee has written up its findings and submitted the report to the proper authorities, however. Self-evaluation is a continuous process of appraisal, change, and improvement. While an important step toward implementing the Standards is made when facilities, equipment, staff, and books needed to carry out the mission of the library are listed, new factors in the changing junior college situation must continually be accounted for. Modifications in the curriculum, additions of new programs of study, and changing concepts of the role of the junior college necessitate continuous review and evaluation, a fact realistically considered in

the Junior College Library Standards. Like so many other aspects of library service, self-evaluation is never completed.

It is almost certain that in this new decade, which may see college enrollments doubled, the junior college and its library will be playing an even more important role in American education than it has until now. We hope that by the end of this decade the objectives of junior college libraries as outlined in the Standards will have been realized. We hope that by then the pressing problems of organization, finance, and control will be substantially alleviated. The challenge calls for the best efforts of competent, pioneering junior college librarians. The new decade holds the answer.

Information concerning the success junior college librarians have achieved in implementing the Junior College Library Standards in their individual libraries is of considerable interest to the ACRL Committee on Standards. We also solicit information about any state or regional meetings held to study and to discuss the Standards. We hope eventually to use this information in the compilation of a summary of progress. Please send any information that might be useful for this purpose to Norman E. Tanis, Henry Ford Community College Library, 4824 Lois, Dearborn, Michigan.

Financial Aid to Libraries

Companies and other organizations or individuals eager to "do something" for American colleges and universities but fearful that they lack "know how" might well give serious consideration to the [problems of college and university libraries], and act. The subject lies at the heart of American higher education, and is a main source of its nourishment—*Wake Up and Read, a Few Facts About College and University Libraries* (New York, Council for Financial Aid to Education, Inc. [1960].)