

The Changing Instructional Role of the High School Library Media Specialist, 1950–84: A Survey of Professional Literature, Standards, and Research Studies

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The instructional role of the library media specialist in school library media centers has been described in the literature for almost half a century. School library media specialists have been characterized as “instructional leaders, curriculum developers and resource consultants par excellence.”(1) Their part in the instructional program of the school has been defined in several sets of national standards and in textbooks published as early as the 1930s and 1940s. The numerous appellations that have been applied to school library media specialists within this relatively short period of time might logically provoke a series of questions regarding such rapid change. Have the different occupational titles been employed to define the legitimate activity of the school library media specialist, or have they been utilized as organization fictions that the profession uses to “overcome an unfavorable stereotype or to provide a more comforting self-image?”(2)

Objectives

This article will review and examine the relevant literature pertaining to the changing instructional role of the school library media specialist from 1950 to 1984 in order to determine whether the instructional role has changed during this period. Particular attention will be paid to representative literature published during this time span by library/media educators, practitioners, leaders of state and national professional associations, and advisory agencies in order to determine what conditions prevailed during the various time periods. The educational philosophy and practices of each decade will be discussed to demonstrate, where appropriate, their influence on the growth and development of the librarian’s instructional role. Standards published by the American Association of School Librarians in 1960, 1969, and 1975 will be analyzed for official sanctions of changes. Research studies that attempted to document the instructional status of the librarian during various time periods will be reviewed for the purpose of verifying any changes.

The Fifties

The decade between the close of World War II and the mid-fifties was termed by many educators as a decade of American complacency. Americans had emerged victorious from a world war and

were exulting in their acknowledged super-power status. School librarians floundered in a wave of anti-intellectualism and the conformity that was precipitated by technological democracy and the Cold War. Reactionary citizens groups argued against the need for increased taxes to construct schools, employ additional teachers, and purchase new materials. As a result of this poor financial support, only 37 percent of U.S. secondary schools reported receiving the services of a centralized library by 1953–54. Teaching, despite the noticeable increase in audiovisual services offered by school libraries, was still dominated by the textbook.

The launching of Sputnik in 1957 was the catalyst that halted America's complacency and expedited the educational process. Sputnik led the way for Americans' receptivity to such reports as *The Pursuit of Excellence*(3) and *The American High School Today*,(4) which demanded excellence in all aspects of the educational endeavor. At this point, federal funds were made available for the purchase of the school library as a resource center, and not merely a depository. By the late 1950s, schools began to focus on learning rather than teaching, and on curriculum methods that permitted a broader instructional role for the school librarian.

Although the previous programs and events greatly influenced the growth and development of the school librarian's instructional role, a survey of the literature demonstrated that practitioners and library educators were already preparing the way for substantial change. In *School Libraries: 1949–1950, A Summary*, Krentzman noted that the librarian is in a "particularly strategic position to participate effectively and to provide some leadership in curriculum development." (5) Her denouncement of the use of the library as a study hall and her promotion of its use as an activity center were prescient. Within the same year, Hunt advocated that the librarian should be a "reader's adviser, a coordinator of instruction and an expert in diagnostic and remedial procedures, in reading and should play a key role in the development of the school program." (6) The publication of these two articles should probably be considered more prophetic than descriptive of the period.

A further examination of the literature provides a more realistic set of activities. The majority of librarians in the early fifties had their role officially defined by Fargo in her classic textbook, *The Library in the School*. (7) In it she defined the aims of the school library as being the provision of reading guidance and cooperation with the faculty on curriculum committees.

Henne, in *Planning Guide for the High School Library Program*, (8) relied upon the 1945 purposes set forth by AASL (American Association of School Librarians) as defining the instructional role. These goals similarly encouraged "participation with other teachers and administrators in programs for the continuing professional and cultural growth of the school staff and stimulating and guiding pupils in all phases of reading." (9)

In 1953, Lohrer introduced an issue of *Library Trends* devoted to school librarianship with a statement that indicated that "library service was beginning to be expressed in terms of social, reading and vocational guidance and as part of the teaching functions of the school library." (10) In that same issue, James indicated that the "modern concept of library work included: (1) provision of books and audiovisual materials to the students and faculty; (2) assistance with curriculum development; (3) class visitations; (4) consultation with departmental groups; and (5) preparation of bibliographies for course units." (11) The James article essentially reflected the

education philosophy for school librarians during the early fifties. Although the instructional role of the librarian was delineated, it still remained one of advising, supplying, and guiding students and faculty. Its passivity can be readily detected in such statements as three and four above.

It remained for a professor of education, W. L. Davis, to recommend a more active instructional role for the school librarian. Davis envisioned a librarian who provided course-integrated instruction for students in the use of materials centers. His perceptions were ahead of his contemporaries' and do provide testimony to the fact that progress was being made.(12)

Another prevailing debate of the early fifties that definitely affected the instructional role of the school librarian concerned the study hall concept of the library. A review of the literature reveals the contradictory views regarding this idea and indicates the extent to which libraries were being used in this manner. Goudeau provides a detailed list of the advantages and disadvantages of the concept, while simultaneously asserting that librarians should be regarded as teachers and their departments totally integrated into the curriculum.(13)

By the mid-fifties, the debate concerning these two issues abated, and the instructional role of the school librarian began to reflect the changes that were occurring in the basic philosophy of education. The most important of these changes in relation to school libraries were (1) emphasis upon the child as an individual; (2) recognition of individual differences and the concept of a developmental rather than a selective-elimination approach; (3) use of many sources of information; and (4) use of small-group as well as individual and class learning activity.

In 1958, Ahlers published an article that precisely defined the instructional role of the school librarian in relation to the faculty and administration. In an attempt to permanently banish the idea that course-integrated instruction was to be the "special province of the librarian alone or of the librarian working with the English teacher," Ahlers advocated that principals, teachers, and librarians coordinate their efforts and incorporate library instruction skills into every subject area.(14)

While a cursory interpretation of these educational positions might lead to a conclusion that there had been no change in the instructional role of the school librarian from the early to late fifties, this assumption would prove specious. From 1950 to 1959, the literature indicated that changes were occurring to the extent that school librarians were perceived as being less passive and were responsible for initiating library instruction that was integrated with class work.

Fain, however, in reviewing the literature on this subject discerned what she termed an "undercurrent of disappointment between the idea of the school librarian as being the hub of a creative instructional program, and the actuality—the school librarian has frequently had only a marginal role."(15) Although proof of this perception is extremely difficult because of lack of concrete support, an examination of research studies may provide further evidence to illuminate the dichotomy that Fain and others perceived in the literature. During the 1950s, several studies concentrated on the instructional role of the school librarian. Romine, in a 1950 study of reports from 340 North Central Association high schools in twenty states, found that the multitude of services performed by the librarian could be classified into eighteen areas.(16) Of these, three were instructional in nature: (1) assisting pupils in use of the library; (2) assisting teachers in

using the library; and (3) instruction pupils in library science. Using a rating scale of zero to three, librarians indicated that they gave little attention to activities two and three and some attention and time to activity one. A second aspect of the study concerned the finding that in schools of less than five hundred pupils, librarians had less than a fifty-fifty chance of operating a study hall library. These findings, while disappointing with respect to the instructional role of the librarian, do corroborate several of the articles that were published during the early fifties.

About the same time, Mahar studied fifty New York state school libraries to determine their contribution to curriculum improvement.(17) Her findings indicated that activities relating to traditional concepts of the school library were performed generally by the school librarians, whereas activities implied by recently developed concepts were not performed to any great extent. Librarians served primarily as providers of materials.

In 1955, Voisard studied high schools with an enrollment of more than one thousand and found that while librarians were frequently included in committees for special curriculum projects, they were rarely full participants.(18) These findings seem to verify the climate of the times. Education was just beginning to acknowledge individual learning styles, to provide other sources of materials, and to permit a more active instructional role for the school librarian. A study by Bianchi involved a survey of five thousand teachers in urban secondary schools to identify teacher attitudes toward the school library and the use they made of it.(19) Although some of the results could be termed disappointing in light of the new concepts proposed in the literature for that time, it seems evident from an analysis of the findings that progress had been made. The library was cited by 88.8 percent of the respondents as playing an important role in the total instructional program of the school.

A third source of material that furnishes information about the degree of change includes the pronouncements and standards of state and national library associations and education departments regarding new concepts.

With the introduction of audiovisual material into the curriculum, the adoption of less traditional subjects, and the abolishment of the library as a study hall, the road was being paved for the concept of the school library as an instructional media center and for a changing instructional role for the school librarian. As early as 1956, the American Association of School Librarians acknowledged this new concept by issuing a statement that defined the role of the school as a center for print and non-print instructional materials and that of school librarians as “coordinators, consultants and supervisors of instructional materials on each level of school administration.”(20) This official statement by a national organization representing school librarians invested the changes that were slowly taking place in the literature and in libraries with a degree of certainty. They endowed the literature and even future research studies with a framework of acknowledge reality.

The Sixties

In school library development and education in general, the 1960s can be described as a decade of ferment. “rhetoric and ideas abounded as to what education would do to solve a number of pressing social issues—from integrating the schools racially to promoting a love of reading

among the disadvantaged or disinterested.”(21) The curriculum became subject to broad interpretation as students evidenced a growing need for all kinds of education and aspired to greater educational achievement. Learning was no longer viewed as a transitory state, but was instead seen as a continuing and lifelong process. School introduced a variety of curricular and instructional changes involving such diverse areas as communication arts, citizenship education, vocational education, fine arts, and the humanities. Innovations in methods of instruction included independent study, advanced placement, greater interrelation of subjects, team teaching, special attention to the socially and economically deprived, track system or ability sectioning, selective instruction to curtail dropouts, and expanded block periods for both large- and small-group instruction. A larger number of children and youths attended school for longer periods of time. Centralization of school districts occurred, which resulted in gained efficiency and versatility. During this period federal funds became available to schools and libraries with the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, the Library Services and Construction Act in 1964, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965. Monies became available for the increased purchase of materials other than textbooks.

The changes that occurred in education in the sixties had a definitive impact on the instructional role of the school librarian. The school’s new emphasis on “diversified learning materials—both printed and nonprinted—for all subjects and levels of ability” finally brought to school librarians the opportunity for the greater instructional role that had been described by Berger, Davis, Hunt, Henne, and Mahar in the 1950s.(22) the status of the librarian in Davies’ glorified words changed from study hall monitor and book curator to “team teacher, learning expediter and media programming educator.”(23)

An examination of the library literature published during this period presents a similar picture built upon the sense of optimistic expectation that characterized the times. One of the first library educators to express such assurance in the changing instructional role of the librarian was Grazier. In a futuristic article, she perceived and defined the librarian’s instructional role as that of a provider of “expert assistance in the use of materials based on an understanding of the methods, concepts and data in a given field.”(24) Although this role was well established in the 1950s, Grazier developed it a step further by advocating the structured use of book talks, which amounted to an integrated schoolwide reading guidance program cooperatively planned by teachers and librarians. The librarian’s role in library instruction was solidly based upon course integrated instruction.

In 1963, Ellsworth and Wagener published a book that graphically depicted the concept of the school library as a teaching laboratory.(25) Organized within the concept of team teaching, they recommended that librarians serve as members of teams and meet with teachers to evaluate instructional programs. Ellsworth and Wagener drew a parallel to a pattern evident in the development of college librarianship, indicating that there appeared to be a ten-year lag between the introduction of a concept and its actualization in the profession. This observation, while somewhat consistent with a comparison of related literature vis-à-vis research studies, is still difficult to prove. Introduction and acceptance of change in the school library seem more dependent upon the speed with which changes occur in society and education.

A further examination of the literature describing the instructional activities during this period indicated that the librarian's instructional role evolved more rapidly than it did in the 1950s. A series of articles published in the *ALA Bulletin* in 1963 illustrated the more active role librarians were taking in the curriculum. The first in the section described a school librarian's opportunity to demonstrate the values of planning assignments for effective use of library resources.(26) The second article featured a demonstration of a library teaching unit in action via closed circuit television,(27) and the last article discussed the library functioning as a "workshop-laboratory" and the librarian serving in a dual capacity of teacher and materials expert.(28)

Although the previous articles furnished definite clues that the instructional role of the librarian was changing from passive to active, there were still several issues of the early sixties that impeded the progress of change. Also prevalent in the literature were articles that weighed the pros and cons of classroom libraries versus central libraries. While this debate might seem irrelevant in light of today's situation, it was a critical factor in the evolution of the instructional role. Librarians experienced great difficulty in coordinating teaching units with faulty who were ensconced in their classrooms with a sufficient collection to continue their own instruction. A second issue pertained to nonlibrarians who accepted the new concept of an instruction materials center, but who could not conceive of a different instructional role for the librarian in that setting. As late as the mid-sixties, publications continued to describe the instructional role of the librarian as one of sophisticated supplier of print and nonprint items rather than an active participant in the educational process.

In that same year, however, a position paper prepared for the Department of Audiovisual Instruction of the National Education Association described the role of the media professional in education in such new terms that its descriptive standard continued to be employed in the seventies and eighties. DAVI perceived the "role of the media professional as changing from that of a keeper and dispenser of teaching aids to that of an analyst and designer of instructional systems who must be centrally involved in the planning of learning environments, and in providing for related support functions and evaluative procedures."(29) It was proposed that the media professional prepare teaching materials, provide in-service education for teachers and administrators in the selection and use of instructional materials and techniques, and assist with the evaluation of the results of the use of instructional materials and technological resources for teaching.

A content analysis of this proposal reveals a significant synapse in the instructional role described in the library activities of the early- to mid-sixties and the role described by the DAVI definition. Library educators had not yet employed the terms *analyst*, *designer*, and *preparer* with respect to materials. Articles continued to depict the instructional role of the librarian as a materials specialist who actively served as a "liaison between knowledge about, interest in, and optimum use of materials."(30)

Although the previous analysis of selected literature helps one to understand part of the changing instructional role of the librarian in the 1960s, a survey of research studies performed coincidentally reveals a more realistic aspect. Five studies performed in the sixties attempted to clarify or categorize the instructional role of the school media specialist. In 1961, Lohrer received a grant to conduct a nationwide status survey to determine the role of school libraries

that functioned as instructional materials centers. In a progress report, Lohrer reported that the integration of the library program into the overall teaching program appeared to be greater in schools where the library served as the center providing all materials.(31) This finding coincided with the development of the media center concept in the early 1960s.

Lane's findings regarding the instructional role of the school librarian in 265 schools in Oregon were somewhat disheartening.(32) Only 53.9 percent of the librarians reported working with teachers in the selection of materials, 22.9 percent helped in planning units of instruction, 42.8 percent provided professional materials, and 37.5 percent introduced new materials through book talks, demonstrations, or displays.

Another research study performed by Gaver in 1969 attempted to identify the variety of services high school media staffs offered their patrons through a survey using a checklist of approximately 280 items. Although the survey represented the opinions of library media specialists and not the faculty or student body, more than 60 percent of those surveyed identified fifteen instructional services offered in their libraries. Among the instructional activities were (1) orientation given to new students; (2) individual and group instruction in the use of the media center; (3) instruction in the use of the center integrated with English classes; and (4) class visits scheduled for supervised reference work in the media center.(33) A study of these services discloses the extent to which the literature published in the sixties mirrored actual library practice. The results of Gaver's research helped to demonstrate that the instructional role of the librarian was still somewhat static. It can be viewed, however, as a positive change from the passive instructional role that typified the school librarian of the 1950s.

The last research effort that illustrated the instructional role of the librarian was the publication of *Occupational Definitions for School Library Media Personnel*, which described the instructional role of the librarian in terms of the following abilities: (1) contributing to collection development; (2) working cooperatively and effectively with the SLMC head, other SLMC staff, and teachers; and (3) teaching students how to use materials and equipment critically and independently. These three competencies may be considered descriptive of the current practice in the leading school libraries during the late sixties. Their perceptions of the nature and scope of the position depicted "an active teaching role in the instructional program of the school through instruction in the effective use of media and equipment."(34)

A third influence that contributed to the changing instructional role for the school librarian was the issuance by the American Association of School Libraries of two sets of standards, another set published by the National Education Association, and several reports and criteria disseminated by national educational groups. All of these recommended the concept of the school library as a media center and espoused a changed role for the librarian.

The first report, published by the National Study of Secondary School Evaluation, expanded the 1960 edition of *The Manual for Evaluative Criteria* to include a means for evaluating the school library as an instructional materials center.(35) In the same year, the American Association of School Librarians issued a set of standards that recommended an overall plan of instruction in which use of materials is fully integrated with classroom work.(36) By 1963, the National Committee of the National Association Project on Instruction entitled *Schools for the Sixties*

declared that “in each school system there should be one or more well-planned instructional materials and resource centers . . . staffed by persons who are adequately prepared in curriculum and instruction, and in library service, and in audio-visual education.”(37)

All of these reports and proclamations indicated that a change in the educational role for the school librarian was being advocated, and, in 1969, the American Association of School Librarians and the Department of Audiovisual Instruction recognized it by issuing a new set of standards. While similar in many ways to the 1960 standards, the new ones described a more unified media concept. References were made to media specialists, and their instructional role involved: “(1) Acting as resource persons in the classroom when requested by teachers; (2) serving on teaching teams; (3) working with teachers to design instructional experiences; (4) working with teachings in curriculum planning; (5) assuming responsibility for providing instruction in the use of the media center; and (6) assisting teachers . . . to produce materials which supplement those available through other channels.”(38)

The instructional changes mirrored in the 1969 standards and in literature of the sixties were unfortunately not reflected in the actual practice of school librarianship. But change did appear to occur more rapidly, for the reasons previously noted, than during the 1950s. There was a discernible pattern of progress. More school librarians—now called school library media specialists—when not preparing instructional programs, were consulting and cooperatively working with faculty members to supply them with additional materials. The instructional media center concept, if not the media specialist’s more integrated role, had been accepted by administrators, faculty and students.

The Seventies

If the sixties were described as a time of ferment in education, the seventies were termed a time of action. Crisis precipitated by an economic recession and energy shortages emotionally enhanced the criticism of education that had begun as early as 1956 as a reaction to the level of student achievement. Momentous legislation and the social upheaval of the late sixties reduced the autonomy of the schools and culminated in a significantly altered educational philosophy. This period witnessed an actual, rather than merely a proposed, change from passive learning on the part of students to an environment in which students and teachers actively participated together in projects and activities that served to convey information previously provided by a textbook or a teacher. The form of change that occurred in approximately one-fourth of the school districts involved the establishment of some type of alternative school.

The diversity associated with the introduction of these programs produced a climate in which the school became increasingly regarded as an agent of change. A watchword for the curriculum was the term “relevancy.” The school that had long been viewed in the community as a self-contained and wholly autonomous structure began to be considered more an extension of the community and an institution whose instruction extended beyond the boundaries of school. The democratization of education emerged as part of the search for greater equality and social justice and was apparent in the priority given to education by minority groups and students residing in rural areas.

By the late seventies, however, educational institutions began to encounter opposition to some of their aims and objectives, and pleas were heard for a return to the basics. Accusations were made that schools in search of a philosophy of education were producing a generation of “idea hoppers.”(39) The schools responded with a reexamination of their goals and began formulating standards for minimal competencies. As national test scores plummeted, changes were again made in curricula, and schools began to focus on such areas as (1) adaptation to change; (2) development of competencies; (3) problem-solving skills; and (4) use of research skills.

Within this environment of change, the school library finally receives assurance that its educational goals and objectives, which in many cases were ahead of the times, were now appropriate. Some of the literature, however, authored by librarians as well as educators, accused school librarians of laboring under several instructional delusions and cast doubt on the ability of librarians to achieve their goals. In 1970, for example, Brickwell persuasively argued that the school was such a “complex system” that librarians could not successfully accomplish the deep intervention associated with the establishment of an instructional role for themselves that involved consultant services and direct instruction.(40) Hannigan informed librarians in 1973 that they were mired in a world of print and that they lacked sufficient knowledge of non-print materials.(41) A year later, Miller described the instructional goals of media specialists as “curriculum delusions.”(42) These criticisms seemed to reflect an evolutionary pattern as librarians reacted to the permanent addition of nonprint materials, their need to instruct, and their desire to participate in the curriculum process. They had to learn how to incorporate audiovisual materials in learning situations at a time when little research guidance was being provided in the literature. They had to devise methods to wean faculty from their classrooms. They had to become fully informed about the total curriculum, rather than just a particular department’s wish to create a new teaching unit.

By the midseventies, books such as *Instructional Design and the Media Program* by Hug(43), *The School Librarian as Educator* by Wehmeyer(44), *The Learning Center* by Peterson(45), and *School Library Media Center* by Prozano(46) defined the accepted role of the librarian in education and even provided a series of course-related suggestions for performing that role. As the decade progressed, the literature was characterized by a plethora of scholarly articles that no longer recommended that the instructional role of the media specialist be active. They instead discussed various factors that affected the further development of the educational role.

Grazier, for example, provided the main characteristics of the old and new instructional roles by contrasting the instructional role under which the librarian operated in the sixties with the new role being recommended in the seventies. Grazier defined a “traditional” media specialist as one who offered “story telling, book talks, recreational reading, viewing or listening.”(47) Librarians taught library skills, supervised classes when teachers needed planning periods, and provided resources for students pursuing independent study. In the seventies, the media specialist was an integral part of the teaching and learning function and used a variety of strategies to teach students to locate and evaluate resources. They assisted in the design of instructional strategies and offered in-service programs to help teachers produce and use materials.

By the late seventies, most articles and books focused upon the concept of instructional design and the librarian’s role in it. In 1979, Chisholm and Ely published a primer on the subject.(48) In

it they described the role of the media specialist with regard to instructional design, and they provided a context for considering ID (instructional design) in relation to the school media program.

The publication of this book precipitated a controversy over the definition of the instructional role of the school media specialist. Some members of the profession placed the instructional responsibility of the librarian solely in the realm of ID, while others subsumed the teaching function in a list of general responsibilities. That same year Vandergrift explored the issue in a book titled, *The Teaching Role of the School-Media Specialist*.(49) She defined the school media specialist as a teacher, and she differentiated between the terms teaching and instruction.

The research studies conducted during this period did not indicate that such a dichotomy between the terms teaching and instruction was occurring. They did occasionally indicate that a disparity existed between the perceived instructional role of the librarian and the actual role. Several studies also revealed that the perceptions of media specialists were quite different from those held by teachers and administrators. The first nationwide study, conducted by Lacock, found that both teachers and librarians agreed that the media specialist's role should include involvement in instructional design, development, and consultation, and teachers acknowledged their acceptance of such functions.(50) Laresen's study of secondary school principals and media specialists in Utah, however, concluded that each group often disagreed about the appropriate role for the media specialist.(51) Separate studies conducted by Loertscher(52) and Daniel(53) found that the roles of the library and librarian were marginal in the schools. Kerr's study took a different approach and attempted to determine the psychological and sociological characteristics necessary for an acceptance of the changing instructional role of the librarian.(54) Using an exchange resource theory as the study's framework, Kerr surveyed 450 teachers, administrators, and learning resource specialists to determine which characteristics and roles were valued. He found that the most accepted role concerned the provision of informational services.

From 1977 through 1979, several studies conducted by Jones (1977)(55), Rosenberg (1977)(56), Burnell (1978)(57), Teagarden (1978)(58), and Corr (1979)(59), continued to reinforce the fact that librarians were not practicing the new instructional role prescribed for them in the literature. Almost all of the research indicated "an almost obsessive concern by school librarians to prove their instructional worth as teachers."(60) They has a desire to succeed at achieving educational ideas. Nonetheless, a question remains whether the majority of them succeeded in assuming an active, instructional role in the curriculum. Although some of the studies did discern a more active role with respect to providing materials and satisfying the informational needs of students and teachers, the majority found that practitioners were still only marginally involved in the programs of the school and were practicing an instructional role more characteristic of the midsixties. While many school librarians were clearly ahead of teachers and administrators with regard to their expanded role expectations, their achievements generally trailed their instructional aspirations. All of the studies acknowledged an expanded role for the librarian, but only as reflected in the library literature.

Two other types of publications influenced the evolving instrumental role of the librarian during this period. The first type consisted of guidelines and reports issued by state or national agencies. The second type concerned an AASL set of standards published in 1975.

In 1971, *Schools for the Seventies* emphasized the movement toward the “flexible classroom.”(61) The published recommendations of the seminar indicated the curriculum was the single most important part of the instructional program and that new applications of existing curricular methods were needed. Accompanying this pronouncement were descriptions of team teaching, differentiated staffing, individually prescribed and programmed instruction, plus modular or flexible scheduling. As chaotic and disorganized as these approaches sometimes were, they helped to break the bonds formed by the single-textbook classroom-approach that dominated education during the early fifties and sixties. The changed methods of instruction recommended in this seminar stimulated the appropriate instructional response from many librarians as was evidenced by a review of the literature. Many, however, possibly because of the problems associated with the perceptions of teachers, students, and administrators, did not change their instructional role, as was evidenced by the numerous research finding.

Two years later, phase 2 of the *School Library Manpower Project* was completed and the results published as *Behavioral Requirements Analysis Checklist (BRAC)*. BRAC identified approximately seven hundred tasks to be performed by the school library media specialist. This list of functions represented the “first attempt to anticipate, and in some instances conceptualize, the functions and tasks of school media specialists. . .”(62). They provided a sanctioned definition of the instructional role of the school librarian.

In addition to the recommendations and definitions stated in agency reports, quantitative data were still useful for furnishing evidence regarding the need for change. In 1974, the National Center for Educational Statistics surveyed a nationally representative sample of public school media centers.(63) The findings revealed shortages in collections, acquisitions, professional and support staff, and operating expenditures. The negative aspects of the study were subsequently used to stimulate a response from state and local departments of education and helped to focus attention on the need for a new instructional role for the school media specialist. As guidelines, reports, and recommendations were published concerning the instructional role of the school librarian it became apparent to AASL that the 1969 *Standards for School Media Programs* did not discuss it sufficiently.

The American Association of School Libraries responded to the problem by publishing a new set of standards entitled *Media Programs: District and School*(64). Two functions directly pertained to the instructional role of the school media specialists. The first function, design, advised media specialists to “initiate and participate in curriculum development.” The second function, consultation, encouraged media specialists to recommend media applications to accomplish specific instructional purposes. The new set of standards served to elevate the instructional role of specialist, and it delineated the requirements for that role. By the midseventies, librarians were provided with an official interpretation of the instructional role they were to play within the educational framework of the school.

By the end of the seventies, the school media specialist’s instructional role had evolved in the literature to one of prominence. The research studies, however, demonstrated a fairly consistent pattern indicating that the evolution had not totally occurred. The controversy over the terms teaching and instructional design were rendered moot by the empirical evidence documenting the fact that librarians were still confronting the more basic questions surrounding the structuring of

an educational role in a setting that, in many instances, had not evolved from the methods and curriculum practiced in the 1950s.

The Eighties

Although the changes that took place from 1980 to 1984 in education cannot be placed in a decade framework, a set of new issues, which were products of the earlier decades, typified the period. During the latter half of the seventies it was expected that more education for more people would solve a multitude of socioeconomic problems. By the beginning of the 1980s, however, many people doubted the school's capacity to contribute to these democratic ideals. In 1974, for example, 18 percent of those asked in a Gallup poll to grade their schools gave them an A while 6 percent gave them a D. Eight years later only 8 percent gave the schools an A while those giving a D increased to 14 percent(65). Accompanying the public loss of confidence in the schools was a decline in the "coalition of legislators, educators, parents, and others that held the system together and expanded it."(66) The educating functions that were traditionally performed by the home, school, and church changed.

From 1960 until the mideighties, the number of children affected by divorces doubled. Nearly one out of five families is currently maintained by a woman who is either divorced, separated, widowed, or never married. Two-thirds of these mothers work. Although declining enrollment had been a factor in the late seventies, it became a fiscal reality by 1980. Tax revolts began reflecting parents' growing disillusionment with schools and the feelings of people whose children no longer attended school. As education attempted to respond to these major socioeconomic changes, it was confronted with major technological advances. The rapid development of computer technology had a tremendous impact.

While schools valiantly endeavored to maintain themselves within this mercurial environment, educational issues evolved around themes such as "racial equality, the use and abuse of educational technologies, methods used to deal with individual differences in a society becoming increasingly pluralistic, and religion or moral values in education."(67) The approach adopted by many schools to deal with these challenges reflected a swing from the permissive, open, child-centered education to a return to basics and teacher-centered learning. Efforts were undertaken to tighten standards and inform high school students of what was expected of them. A resulting agenda began to form for a reconstruction of schools based upon the gap created by parents' expectations and perceptions.

Within this milieu, school library media specialists continued to forge ahead by publishing a host of books and articles that further defined their instructional role. Monographs such as *The Library Specialist in Curriculum Development*,(68) *The Library Media Program and the School*,(69) and *The School Librarian as Educator*(70) provided practitioners with a philosophical base for their instructional role and pragmatic examples for implementing it.

In 1980, Biggs wrote a proposal for course-related library instruction that entailed the use of undergraduate reference materials at the high school level(71). A year later, a sophisticated model was published by Johnson, focusing on the librarian's role in instructional design(72). In 1982, *Wilson Library Bulletin* dedicated an issue to examining the "school library media center's

revolutionary past and future.”(73) Termed the second revolution, instructional development was defined as a systematic process of designing teaching units for students by a team of professionals that included a teacher and a librarian knowledgeable in instructional technology. Although the terms and process were not new to the 1980s, this article advanced instructional development by producing a well-formulated taxonomy.

Although it is evident that instructional design as a new educational role was based on a firm instructional footing, proselytizing articles—especially those by media educators—continued to appear during this period. In 1983, Turner and Naumer provided a guide to instructional design consultation that possessed four levels. Each level represented a graduated level of involvement in recognition of the facts that the ideal was considered “unrealistic” for many library media specialists to achieve immediately.(74) Cleaver also noted a dichotomy between the actual role of the school library media specialists and the one proposed by the profession in publications. Citing research findings from the sixties and seventies that supported her observation, Cleaver recommended that the instructional role of the library media specialist be expanded more slowly in a planned series of steps.(75)

While the instructional role of the school library media specialist from 1980 to 1984 could be characterized as a period of adjustment concerning the implementation of instructional design activities, the introduction of computers presented library media specialists with a new set of problems. By 1983, librarians were attempting to define their instructional role with respect to this new technology in the literature. As was the case with the introduction of audiovisual materials in the 1950s, most of the recommendations at first placed the library media specialist in the role of supplier and passive resource consultant. Finally, in 1984, Troutner devoted a substantial portion of her book to the instructional uses of the computer. From her perspective, the library media specialist was expected to perform an active role to help design teaching units that integrated the computer into the curriculum.(76)

An analysis of the books and articles published during this short period depicts library media specialists who realized that they must retain an active instructional role with teachers and students while simultaneously adding yet another educational dimension to their role. There is evidence that more systematic approaches were being followed for instruction and that library media specialists were being urged to consider their educational role within the framework of the total program.

A review of research studies conducted during the early 1980s netted three major studies relating to the library media specialist’s instructional role. In 1981, Staples published the results of a statewide Texas survey of 224 practitioners concerning their skills and attitudes toward instructional design. Her findings confirmed some of the results discovered in studies undertaken during the 1970s, which had indicated that librarians were not as interested in the instructional function as much as administrative management.(77)

Turner’s survey of all U.S. accredited library school programs investigated the extent to which students in the master’s level school library media program were provided with instructional design competencies. His findings indicated that schools tended to adopt instructional design as a unitary innovation. A substantial number of programs were discovered to require none.(78)

In 1983, a study by Royal used the survey method to question 235 library practitioners in several midwestern states to ascertain whether school library media specialists were really changing their competency in instructional design.(79) Of the twenty competencies tested in the survey, the only ones performed to a significant degree by library media specialists informed to a significant degree by library media specialists involved the selection of appropriate media for learning activities and the establishment of efficient schedules to ensure the distribution of resources. Respondents did not indicate to a substantial degree that they performed any instructional design competencies.

The conclusions drawn from the previous studies implied that instructional design, while introduced as an officially sanctioned activity by the 1975 standards, was far from a practiced reality as late as 1984. The gap that persisted between the initiation and acceptance of an idea continued to exist.

The guides and reports issued during this period served to alert educators and the public to the plight of education in general, but none referred to the school library media center specifically. In April 1983, a devastating report entitled *A Nation at Risk* was issued that attempted to warn Americans that “Our once unchallenged preeminence was being overtaken by competitors around the world.”(80) Charging that educators had lost sight of their basic purpose the report cited evidence such as the decline in test scores and science achievement, lower achievement scores in comparison with other countries, and a possible 40 percent functional illiteracy rate. The report recommended that schools establish a foundation of required courses in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and computer science. Although this report did not specifically refer to libraries, the severity of the noted problems brought numerous responses from practitioners, library educators, and related ALA organizations, all of which served to renew the idea that change should occur. The following year the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching issued a similar report on American high schools.(81) While both reports neglected to cite the library per se, there was no doubt that their publication instigated a more thorough examination of the role of the library media program within the overall school framework.

Conclusion

It is evident from an analysis of two data sources that an evolution in the instructional role of the library media specialist did occur from 1950 to 1984. A clear pattern of progressive development of the instructional role has persisted in the standards and the literature. The changes in the library media specialist’s role from study hall monitor to curriculum designer can certainly be termed substantive. An analysis of research studies, however, indicates a possible time lag between the practiced instructional role of the library media specialist and the one espoused in the literature. In a profession that has undergone such a tremendous amount of change in such a short period of time, this gap is not surprising. Library media specialists should be congratulated that their professional organizations and publications have responded so quickly and positively to the need for change and that they have continued to successfully expand their instructional role within the school of the 1980s.

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