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Enhancing and Strengthening Faculty-Library Relationships*

by

E. J. Josey

For the last six years, the nation has been celebrating National Library Week. Many scholars in the academic community questioned the folly or the wisdom of those who are supposed to be committed to books and libraries having to be reminded of the importance of these weapons which are very necessary in our war against ignorance and in our battles to discover the truth. In spite of the fact that libraries have been a part of the academic scene for many years, on many campuses they are not as important as the college center or the million dollar gymnasium. The cultural sickness that has caused certain administrators to neglect the development of a strong library is shameful. Very few of these educational statesmen realize that a poor library with poor resources represents a poor college. These administrators of institutions of higher learning must realize that a faculty that does not put the library at the heart of its teaching program is not engaging in purposeful teaching. There are some professors who are not cognizant of the fact that a slavish adherence to teaching from one textbook is not education but miseducation.

From the picture that I have drawn, it is quite evident that National Library Week is a shot-in-the-arm for college libraries as well as the public library. Your librarian, Miss Barbara Williams, and her staff are to be congratulated for their foresight in setting up the Faculty-Library Workshop as part of the 1963 National Library Week celebration on your campus. I am sure that the administration and the faculty of South Carolina State College are not guilty of these library sins that I mentioned above, but rather that in your desire to promote intellectual growth of your students, you are seeking superior library service.

For purposes of organization, I have divided this paper into three sections. The first will deal with the role of the administration; the second will consider the role of the library staff; and the third will assess the role of the faculty. All three have a central place in enhancing and strengthening faculty-library relationships.

Let us turn our attention to the college administration. What is its role? At the outset, we must dispose of the money problem. It is the responsibility of the college administration to support the library financially. The Association of College and Research Libraries' new standards recommend that if a library is to provide adequate service, it must spend "a minimum of 5 per cent of the total educational and general budget."¹ When we point to a minimum standard, it has been

*Address delivered at a Faculty-Library Workshop during National Library Week, April 22, 1963 at South Carolina State College, Orangeburg, South Carolina.

¹Association of College and Research libraries. "Standards for College Libraries," *College and Research Libraries*, 20:275, July 1959.

my observation that we remain at the minimum standard. Of course, this should not be the case. Those college libraries whose collections have not grown to a size that will support the instructional needs of faculty and students must have a much larger appropriation than 5 per cent of the E & G budget in order to catch up.

I have been told by a librarian of a distinguished Negro University in which a Master's program is offered, that he has had considerable difficulty in convincing his administration that because his institution operates a large Master's program it is of paramount importance that the library should be given a larger budget. I suggested that in his next budget request he should point out the following statement from the standards to his administration: "The percentage must be higher if the library's holdings are seriously deficient, if there is a rapid expansion in the student population, of course offerings, or if the institution fosters a wide range of studies at the Master's level or programs of independent study."²

In our zeal to promote quality education in our institutions of higher education, it is imperative that we spend a substantial amount of money over and above the minimum. This is especially true in Negro institutions, for I have discovered in a survey that I am now making that about 95 per cent of these institutions do not have the minimum number of books in their library collections. Yes, it is true that many of these institutions have built new library buildings, just as we have done on my campus, but their collections are woefully inadequate.

Turning from money matters, it is this librarian's belief that it is the administration's responsibility to foster a healthy intellectual attitude toward the library. In short, the president and the dean should let the faculty know that they sincerely believe that the library is the heart of the institution and should be an integral part of every faculty member's teaching program. This view was more cogently expressed by Dr. Harold Taylor when he was President of Sarah Lawrence College. Dr. Taylor stated, "First, I do not think it is possible to build a good course in any of the areas of human knowledge without a direct relationship between the teacher and the librarian. In my experience in trying to build new courses in philosophy at the University of Wisconsin, I suddenly discovered that my greatest allies were not the members of the college Curriculum Committee, or even the members of the philosophy department. My greatest allies were the librarians at the university. When I sat down with them I found immediately that we could talk about the use to which certain books could be put, the number of pages which might be suitable for assignments, etc. My education as a teacher thus began when I started to collaborate with librarians, so I submit that it is the duty of the college president and the dean, when a young instructor comes into a college situation to take as their first task the development of a sound relationship between the new teacher and the library."³ I wholeheartedly endorse the position of Dr. Taylor.

²Ibid.

³Taylor, Harold. "Students, Books and Librarians," in *Library-Instructional Integration on the College Level*, Report of the 40th Conference of Eastern College Librarians, ACRL Monographs, No. 13, (Chicago: ACRL, 1955) p. 1.

It is also this librarian's philosophy that the chief librarian of the college should be a part of the power structure of the institution. The power structure is the Administrative Council.

In considering the President's responsibility in this regard, Guy Lyle, Director of Libraries at Emory University, in his new book, writes, "The college president bears the chief responsibility for opening up the formal channels. It is his responsibility to see that the librarian is represented, along with the chief administrative officers of the college, on the Administrative Council, the Academic Council, if there is one, and the library committee. There are institutions where the librarian is not on any of these committees and the library administration is not in touch with the mainstream of the administrative activity. One observes the symptoms as soon as one sets foot on the campus. Library support is meager, faculty interest in the library is dormant, and staff morale is low."⁴

The foregoing view was that of a librarian. We will again turn to Dr. Taylor for a college president's view. This scholar not only suggests to college presidents but also to deans, a similar viewpoint when he asserted, "I would, therefore, say that it is the function of the college president and the dean, by whatever administrative means they can take, by appointment, by encouragement, by administration of the budget, to ask the librarian to form part of the Curriculum Committee on the planning for new courses, to invite the librarian to sit on the committees where the new courses are discussed, to use his source of information both about the students and about the books for the use of his colleagues in the teaching faculty."⁵

We have dealt with the administration long enough. Now, it is our task to look at the role of the library staff. If you would permit me to conjecture at this point, Shakespeare may have had librarians in mind when he created these words for Cassius: "Men at sometimes are masters of their fate: The fault dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings." In short, librarians are, in some instances, responsible for their poor status in the academic community, for they have been too timid to ask for larger appropriations for the library. They have been too fearful to seek academic rank, and they have not demanded that the faculty build an integrated library-instructional program with librarians as partners.

Deploring the complacency of librarians, this librarian once complained, "Some librarians have perpetuated this situation, for they have become too involved in the mechanics of circulation procedures and inflexible library regulations, in keeping the library a quite mausoleum and in unnecessary clerical routines to the point where they do not have time to aid their professorial colleagues by giving bibliographical lectures, assisting in the instruction of the use of the library, making themselves available to discuss with the faculty the strengths and weak-

⁴Guy R. Lyle, *The President, the Professor and the College Library*. (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1963), p. 26.

⁵Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

nesses of the collection and encouraging faculty to suggest improvement in library service.”⁶

Supporting Cassius’ dictum, “The fault dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings,” Lyle contends that “librarians must learn to be flexible and to consider suggestions with an open mind instead of immediately rejecting them . . . Too many librarians have isolated themselves from the faculty by falling into the same error. If someone suggests opening the stacks, they say the library was not designed for open-stacks and the stack stairways are too narrow. If someone suggests opening a smoking room, they say the fire laws forbid it. This may be quite true, of course, but everyone on campus knows the fire laws forbid smoking in classrooms and offices but no one pays any attention to them. If the library gets a reputation for letting faculty suggestions drop like a wet mop on the pavement, there is little likelihood that the president will see any real advantage in bringing the librarian into his advisory councils.”⁷

If faculty-library relationships are to be enhanced and strengthened, each staff member of the library has a responsibility for contributing to this relationship. This includes each professional librarian on the staff, as well as each clerical assistant. This implies that staff members should be sensitive to students and faculty library needs. Staff members must never forget that the library is a service agency, and therefore, they are expected to be friendly, courteous, and anxious to respond in a helpful manner. In this regard, the director of the library must be certain that assistants who aid patrons in service areas, e.g., at the circulation desk, the reference department, or in the reading rooms, are persons who enjoy bringing books and people together. Assistants who have personality problems or those who are disgruntled should work behind the scenes, for the public areas are nerve centers of the library and these are the areas where patrons form their opinions about the library. It is not the intention of this critic to intimate that librarians and clerical assistants should be subjected to undignified and humiliating treatment from distinguished professors who feel that everyone on campus owes them recognition, nor should they have to endure the taunts or scurrilous remarks of the dilettante student. In essence, I firmly believe that winning friends and influencing people for the library not only builds public relations for the library, but it also contributes immeasurably to scholarship, for faculty members and students will never be reluctant to enter the house of knowledge in order to satisfy their research or recreational reading needs.

With reference to the book collection, the faculty has an important role to play in the selection of books for the library. It is also true that the librarians have an important function in building the library collection. Librarians should engage in the reading of critical reviews about books, and more important, they should read the books themselves. Only through a wide acquaintance with books can the librarian be-

⁶Josey, E. J. “The Absent Professors,” *Library Journal*, 87:181, January 15, 1962.

⁷Lyle, Guy. *Op. Cit.*, p. 27.

come effective in his responsibility of caring for the book needs of his campus.

Great libraries were never built by librarians alone, for the dedicated bibliophiles and lovers of books on the faculty have been the architects of some of the nation's outstanding college and university libraries. However, the best approach to building the library collection is in the words of Guy Lyle who says ". . . it is obvious that there must be a 'working combination' of administrators, faculty and library staff. Each has his role to play and the librarian cannot delegate his part. Despite his preoccupation with budgets, building, and staffing, the college librarian must make the development of the book collection his major concern."⁸

The library staff plays an important role in the instructional program of the college. They are seldom paid what they justly deserve. Their hours are usually longer than the instructors who are in the classrooms. On some campuses, they are not looked upon as instructional personnel, but librarians are teachers. Everytime a student or professor is assisted in using the card catalog, an index, or whenever the reference librarian checks for elusive material for a research paper for the student or information for a professor who is writing a book, or whenever the cataloger ferrets out a title by diligently checking through bibliographies and catalogs, one will find highly trained men and women at work with the same kind of dedication to scholarship as one finds simultaneously in the classroom.

What is the role of the faculty in building good faculty-library relationships? The faculty plays a significant role in leading students to books. The centrality of the text book in the education of college students has hampered learning. Today, the emphasis is upon the use of a wide variety of titles in teaching rather than teaching from one textbook. Unfortunately, we have had too many students to graduate from Negro colleges who were intellectually impoverished, because faculty members ignored the library. This is not necessarily indicative of Negro colleges and Negro professors alone, for Dr. Taylor indicates "all over the country, however, I have found teachers in academic communities who are going straight alone managing to teach without the cooperation of their college librarians. The reason I believe it is impossible for them to teach truly without the librarian as their colleague is that the gap between the abstract assignment given by a teacher and the accomplishment of valuable learning on the part of the student amounts, in some cases, to a chasm. In fact, I think a great many teachers are entirely unaware of exactly what happens to an individual student immediately after his assignments are handed out to him, as well as during the whole of the term in which he must deal with them. It is this lack of correlation between what happens within the consciousness of the student and what happens to the educational process, whether in the library or in the classroom . . ."⁹

⁸*Ibid.* p. 39.

⁹Taylor, *Op. Cit.*; p. 14.

While we are on the question of library assignments, Donald Ranstead, Social Science Reference Librarian, the University of California at Davis, complains that students, in many instances, leave their classes without the faintest idea of the subject under discussion or what the professors desire of them. Listen to this dialogue reported by Mr. Ranstead: "Were Sacco and Vanzetti gangsters in Chicago or was it some other town? Informed that they were not gangsters, but anarchists, this led to: 'What's an anarchist?' Instances could be multiplied. I doubt if any faculty member has been asked by his graduate students where that fabulous book (or journal) *Ibid* is, as many times in his whole career as this librarian has been asked in any six-month period over the past six years."¹⁰

Professors are usually unaware of the deficiencies of their students, for far too many hurry from the lecture hall and never encounter the student again until the next class meeting. Very few professors visit the library. Their attitude is that the library exists for the student, not this professor.

Many claim that they have excellent collections at home, but librarians are unable to buy enough books for the college library because of the high cost of books, and therefore, they question the veracity of this assertion. Even if they could afford to purchase all of the books published yearly in their fields, they do not have access to the hundreds of journals that are housed in the library. "The constant outpouring of papers is not known to the specialists in their fields except through abstracts and indices housed in the library."¹¹

Professors usually deplore the lack of interest in reading by today's students. Many students do not feel that it is important to read, because they seldom see their professors in the college library. If our students could observe their teachers in the stacks pouring over the books, and literally drinking from the fountain of knowledge, then they too, will imitate their professors. Set an example for your students. Let them see you in the library.

The faculty has a responsibility for book selection. On many campuses, there are professors who have never recommended a book for purchase to the library. These professors evidently believe that the library has every book that has been published, since John Gutenberg invented the printing press, for these scholars make assignments upon the assumption that the book or the books are in the library. It does not necessarily follow that because a professor used a certain book as a graduate student at Harvard, Yale, Chicago or Columbia that this book will be in the South Carolina State College Library. Visit the library in order to ascertain the library's holdings in your field. If the materials that you desire are not there, the librarian and his or her staff will be happy to procure them for you.

Continuing an exploration into the faculty's responsibility for book selection, one author contends that "the faculty has a twofold respon-

¹⁰Ranstead, "Feed-Back to Faculty," *Library Journal*, 87: p. 171.

¹¹Josey, E. J. *Op. Cit.*; p. 174.

sibility in building up library resources in subject fields. The first is to keep the collection up to date by careful selection of new publications and a weeding of the old. The second is to fill gaps in the collection." There is no rigid rule for carrying out this twofold responsibility.

At my institution, we have a flexible plan. Some departments have designated one person to make suggestions of books for purchase. One division asked each faculty member to survey the holdings in his field and contribute a suggested list which is compiled and submitted to the division. Some departments have a laissez faire approach and all faculty members of the departments may submit book requests whenever they deem it necessary. The plan used is not important, but it is essential that faculty members participate in the book selection process, for they are in the classroom and are aware of their instructional needs.

Another serious library problem is the reserve system. The real purpose of assigning books to the reserve shelves is to guarantee the availability of certain books to all the students in a given course. Unfortunately, many professors make their assignments before they notify the library that these books should be on reserve. Consequently, when the library is informed that the desired titles should be on reserve, a few students have checked the books out of the library. This situation creates much ill will and frustration among those students who do not have access to these materials.

Many librarians have misgivings about the reserve system. Some say that students so very often get the impression that the books on reserve are the only books in the library on the subject or that the books on reserve are the best books. They also contend that reserve reading stifles the initiative to read a wide variety of authorities on the subject. A suggestive reading list that has depth and breadth, and at the same time, includes authorities for various schools of thought, will contribute immeasurably to the intellectual growth of our students than the narrow perspective received from reserve reading.

There are many other aspects of enhancing and strengthening library relationships that I could possibly consider, but I feel that I have kept you long enough. Before concluding, I wish to urge the faculty and the librarians of this historic institution to bridge the intellectual gulf that has traditionally separated the library from the instructional program. Someone has said that "to affect the thinking of man is to influence the course of history." I wish to admonish you to influence the course of history by influencing our students to use books and more books in obtaining their education. Never has the use of a wide variety of books and source materials been more vital to education as in these times. Impress upon our young people that there is a need for superior college graduates in the 60's. Impress upon them that Negro education is dead, and true scholarship has replaced this outmoded concept. This is an irreversible fact! Bridging the gulf which has separated faculty and library will contribute to a brighter future for our young men and women in the years ahead.

The faculty should join hands with the library staff for the purpose

of building better faculty-library relationships, for the library extends knowledge, and through the joint efforts of professors and librarians, there will be a real link between creative teaching and superior library resources and services, which in turn, will contribute to the true spirit of scholarship.