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PUBLIC-SCHOOL LIBRARY COOPERATION IN RURAL AMERICA
... A VIEW FROM THE STATE LEVEL

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I'm delighted to participate in your conference on Partnership for the 80's: Public-School Library Cooperation in Rural America, a very timely subject and one for which we, in North Carolina, share your interest.

You have just heard about the way New York State is organized at the state level for administration and management of school and public libraries. Unlike New York State, school and public libraries are under separate agencies in North Carolina but the heads of both agencies work closely together and are members of the Governor's Cabinet.

The two governing agencies are the Department of Cultural Resources and the Department of Public Instruction. Public libraries are coordinated by the State Librarian and his staff who are part of the Department of Cultural Resources. School libraries are called school media centers in North Carolina and are directly responsible to the State Board of Education. The State Superintendent for Public Instruction is an elected official who represents the State Board of Education on the Governor's Cabinet. Although formal agreements for cooperative ventures take place at the Governor's Cabinet level, the actual implementation of these cooperative ventures takes place in a more relaxed informal setting as members of the State Library staff and the Division of Educational Media staff sit down and plan together to carry out the cooperative arrangements.

CARLSON LIBRARY - PHOTODUPLICATIONS

I want to do two things here today: (1) describe briefly some of the cooperative events that have been planned and implemented at the state level from 1958 to the present, and (2) describe North Carolina's first school-housed public library that was opened in September of 1978 and has proved to be a successful cooperative venture.

As far back as 1958 there were cooperative type events or ventures in North Carolina that were implemented at the state level. I firmly believe that it is imperative that cooperation begin at the state level. State staffs must set examples instead of "mandating" cooperative activities and expecting them to take place at the local level. I am pleased that in North Carolina we have state level staffs who do work together very closely. As far back as 1958 there was a "Policy for Interlibrary Loans," a sheet stating the way in which school and public libraries would share resources. In 1961 a joint position paper was developed and distributed on the coordination of school and public libraries. In 1971 an extensive study was co-sponsored by the State Library, North Carolina Library Association, State Department of Public Instruction and the several colleges and universities in the state. An outside consultant was hired to work with a Task Force to take a good look at all types of libraries and resources and make recommendations as to what should be taking place in North Carolina involving resources sharing and networking. The report of the Task Force was entitled "The Next Step for North Carolina Libraries: A Library Services Network." Most of the recommendations which were outlined in the Task Force report have taken place at the college and university level rather than in school libraries. For example, a statewide interlibrary loan service is commonplace among college and university libraries, special libraries, and public libraries but not among school libraries. Some of the reasons you have already heard today -- lack of telephones in school libraries, data bases, access to computers -- are the same problems that we face in North Carolina.

In 1972 a small group of people in Pamlico County was named to study the feasibility of planning North Carolina's first school-housed public library. A member of the Division of Educational Media staff and of the State Library staff participated in this Feasibility Study Committee. In 1974 shortly after the new State Librarian was named, the two division heads met to discuss joint library needs in North Carolina. One of the first things that we decided needed to be done was a joint study of what were the 16mm film holdings, where were they housed, who were their users, and what were the guidelines for using them.

As a result of that statewide study, several cooperative ventures were undertaken involving 16mm film libraries in North Carolina offering services to rural libraries that did not have access to 16mm film collections of any kind previously. It was also ascertained that the State Library had an extensive film collection that could be opened up to rural school libraries that did not have access to other collections. In order to facilitate faster turn-around time, our Department utilized an existing computer service to develop a computerized 16mm film data base available to anyone in the state willing to add his unique film holdings to the system. We also found that our Department's 16mm staff development collection had a lot of films that both parents and public libraries were interested in borrowing. As a result, we were able to open up both of those film collections. In order to have some control over who was using them and how they were being used, the school librarian goes through the local public librarian, who uses the State Interlibrary Loan service to obtain and return the film to the original owner. A similar system is used for borrowing films that we have in our 16mm staff development library. We now have 16mm film collections in the eight regional centers geographically located throughout the state, and the public can borrow these films also by going through the local public library. This is another example of a cooperative venture that was started, as a

result of the 1972 feasibility study in an effort to share resources already available.

Some other important cooperative events happened during 1977. One of the most significant was librarians (school, public, academic) joining together to plan strategies for getting legislation passed that would benefit everyone. We realized that we were not together as librarians--school librarians were blaming public librarians for not cooperating and in return, public librarians were saying that school librarians were not cooperative. Regional meetings were held throughout the state where all types of librarians met to decide what type of library legislation would benefit all of us. It was decided that on many of the main issues we needed to go to the legislature as a unified group of libraries with a consolidated library package. One of these recommendations was legislation that would give the State Librarian the responsibility to plan and coordinate cooperative programs between various types of libraries within the state as well as to coordinate state development with regional and national library programs. There was money attached to that "bill" to help implement it; the funds were not passed, but the legislation was! So we got half of what we wanted which opened a lot of doors because previously there had been no legislation that gave the State Librarian that authority even though some of it has been assumed in the past.

At the same time the legislation was passed, the Community Schools Act was passed. It was a mandate to increase community involvement in the use of all public schools including all types of library resources, personnel and facilities. There was money included in that Act to hire school community coordinators for the 145 school systems (100 counties and 45 city school systems). Public librarians were a little concerned about this Act. They were afraid that it would take away from the use of the public library (including funds that would be channeled into the public libraries) by opening schools in the evenings and on weekends for use by the entire community. We have found this

not to be true; in fact, we have found just the opposite. Opening up the schools and having school advisory committees plan what courses would be offered for parents and students in the evenings and on Saturdays has brought school and public librarians together to plan how to serve better the clientele using resources from both libraries.

For example, a new high school was being built in Wake County at the time the Community Schools Act was enacted into law. So in planning the library facilities, the architect made certain that outside doors opened directly into the library, that additional shelving was included to house special collections that would be brought from the public library, and that an adjacent community room was included that could be used for special presentations or exhibits. As a result, Community School staff can include plans for library activities as they plan courses that will be offered in the evenings, e.g., special programs for wives in the library while the husbands are taking courses down in the auto mechanics wing or the vocational wing. These classes or special programs would be sponsored jointly by the school librarian and the public librarian. Special materials that public libraries would have that school libraries would not could also be brought over and put on a special display to publicize special events. Even though both school librarians and public librarians feared the Community School Act when it was first enacted, they have found that it has helped to promote the cooperative efforts that needed to take place but that no one took the initiative to get to work.

Tarheel Libraries is a publication which came about as a direct result of the legislation that gave the State Librarian the authority to make certain that cooperation did take place in all types of libraries. An editor was employed in 1977 for Tarheel Libraries, and this has become a newsletter serving all types of libraries in North Carolina. It is a bimonthly publication and carries a job line, legislative update, announcements of forthcoming meetings for

all types of librarians, and publicizes cooperative events that are taking place in all types of libraries across the state. It has been instrumental in fostering better public relations and communications among library professionals.

In telling you about our unique school-housed public library located in Pamlico County, we want to emphasize the fact that it is not something that we think will work in all situations, but it is working in this remote area of our state. It took almost five years from the early planning stage to completion. Pamlico County, located in the extreme eastern part of the state, is very remote from other parts of the state. Most of the people make their living in the fishing industry, either taking out fishing parties, bringing in various kinds of fish for sale, making various kinds of nets for sale, or making and selling boats. The one town in the area that is large enough to support a consolidated high school is Bayboro which happens to be the county seat. Needless to say, it is a very isolated community. People living in this area have to drive forty-five miles to the nearest shopping center, theater, or any other kind of cultural activity. Pamlico County has three elementary schools, one junior high, and one senior high. Students are bused in from a radius of forty-five miles to attend these schools. In 1972 a one-room public library with a small collection was opened a few hours two afternoons per week for interested users, with a volunteer staff.

It did not appear to the feasibility study committee in early 1972 that there was any possibility of getting any other kind of public library service except for a bookmobile that could make a stop in Bayboro once every two weeks. The committee worked long hard hours in going over various aspects of the school-housed public library and in reading and studying other combined facilities that had not worked, trying to ascertain why they had not worked. Superintendent George Brison recommended to the committee that, since they were getting a new addition to the high school anyway, it would not cost much more to

make the new library the kind of facility that would give people in the area access to school and public library services. After many months of planning and discussion, a formal contract was agreed upon and signed by the Board of Education, County Commissioners, Regional Public Library Board, and local Friends of the Library.

In 1978 the doors were finally opened for the formal dedication on a brisk fall Sunday afternoon. I have never seen such an elaborate dedication of a structure as when that new facility was opened to the public. The large auditorium which is part of the library was completely filled. People came from miles around to stand in the back of the auditorium and even out into the street. The school band played; the mayor cut the streamers that opened the door; and when they introduced all the people who had been involved in the planning of this facility, it took quite a long time because the entire Board of Commissioners was there, as well as the School Board and the Public Library Board.

In a combined facility such as this, the careful selection of staff is very important. The man hired to be director of the library has both a school library background and a public library background and was brought in from outside the state. He also had experience in a similar type situation prior to being named director of the combined school/public library. The school librarian, who had been employed at this school for many years, was retained as the assistant director. A new outreach librarian was hired to work with children, older adults and special programs. A reference librarian and clerical staff completed the personnel assigned to the center. The staff decided to stagger their work hours so that there would be both professional and clerical staff on duty at all times when the library was open.

Daytime use of the library appears to be very much like a regular school library. You will have library science classes (where the librarian is teaching library study skills) on one side of the

library, while in other parts of the library individual students are doing reference and research activities, using study carrels with audiovisual equipment, browsing, or just reading magazines and newspapers. In the Easy Room, which is a separate room with glass around it and a little folks' bathroom behind it, you might find kindergarten students from the school next door having a story hour or involved in the process of choosing their first take-home books. These children have a school library in their elementary school, but this is like a visit to the local public library so that they will be able to use the facilities and resources independently when they come back with their parents in the evenings or on weekends. The large auditorium is in use almost constantly for various types of community activities. Prior to this new facility, there was no place for the community to view cultural type programs. Afternoon and Saturday morning film programs are popular with young and old alike.

From the outside, the only way that anyone would know this is a joint library is by the sign on the streetside book return deposit box designed for convenience to the adult patrons and handicapped. A bookmobile parking spot at the back door with extra wide doors allows for regular pickup and delivery services to and from the Regional Public Library forty-five miles away. Yes, we've come a long way in this small rural town from one small room with very limited hours and very old outdated materials to a full fledged media center and public library with informational services, cultural resources, and educational possibilities. I must reiterate that we are not recommending that school and public libraries merge their facilities and collections. In this particular situation it was the remote location, the dedicated people who wanted good school and public library services, and the many years of careful planning that made it work. I know of no other place in North Carolina where it would work--but in Pamlico County it is working!

Another joint venture that made a great impact on school and public libraries in North Carolina was the Governor's Conference on Libraries held in October 1978. The positive way in which it was organized and carried out helped to bridge feelings and bring about a more positive and open attitude between school librarians and public librarians. Prior to the planning of that Conference in 1978 there was a feeling that I call "the blameful you." You've probably heard high school librarians say, "If they only taught library skills the way they should at the elementary level, when the students got to me I wouldn't have to spend all my time doing remedial work." And the elementary librarians say, "You know those high school librarians don't have anything to do but just sit over there and check out books all day; we have to do all the skills teaching at this level." So there's always that little bit of "blameful you" feeling back and forth. A similar type of "blameful you" feeling has existed for years among public librarians, school librarians, and academic librarians. It reminds me of when I was a child and you got really mad at someone your age you'd say the worst thing you could think of to them. And they, in return, would say the worst thing they could think of back to you. When it got so that you couldn't think of anything any worse than what they had said about you, you would say, "You're the same only double!" This was what we tried to overcome during the regional meetings for all types of librarians. We agreed to be very positive--to talk about librarianship as a career, libraries of all types in North Carolina, where we wanted to go, how we wanted to get there, and how we could use the Governor's Conference to accomplish these goals. It was not an easy task but with everyone committed to the idea, it became a reality and the resolutions that came from the Conference attest to the fact.

Another cooperative venture that has been very successful at the state level is the annual jointly sponsored storytelling festival on the Capitol lawn. During National Library Week every year for the

past four years, the State Library and our Department have jointly sponsored storytelling on the lawn of the State Capitol. Librarians from both public libraries and school libraries travel to Raleigh to tell stories using all different kinds of props. We also have high school students who are involved in the library science student assistant's program who like to tell stories to children. When one of the consultants on our staff is scheduled to conduct a storytelling session for school librarians in some part of the state, all of the children's services librarians in that area are also invited to come to hear the storytelling techniques and see the program. Likewise, Diana Young, a State Library Consultant, invites both school librarians and public librarians to be a part of her workshops, also.

Another service that we have recently made available to all librarians of the state is our Division's Materials Review and Evaluation Service. Our MRE Center has a staff of ten people handling materials from over 900 publishers and producers representing forty different types of media. Annotated bibliographies of recommended print and non-print materials are developed and distributed to libraries across the state. The recommended materials are kept in the examination center for eighteen months after the publication of the bibliographies for librarians to examine firsthand before preparing their orders.

In conclusion, I want to share an incident with you that happened not long after I moved to North Carolina and was traveling to a remote area of the state trying to find the small town of Bayboro. I came to a crossroads with a sign pointing in three different directions with the word "Bayboro" on it. Being confused, I asked an elderly man sitting beside the road whittling on a stick, "Does it matter which road I take to Bayboro?" Very solemnly he replied, "Not to me!"

I think this sums up the general public's feelings toward resource sharing, cooperative ventures and networking. They are not

concerned how we reach our goal but they are concerned that we become more accountable, that we continue to move forward even with reduced budgets and escalating prices. How we do it is up to us! In view of this, I feel that it is imperative that we design state and local plans that fit our particular situations and meet our respective needs. Plans that will work well in North Carolina may be very different from those that will work well in New York, Pennsylvania, and other parts of the country. Therefore, I do not feel that we can mandate nationally one system that will work for all types of libraries.

I know of no better way to start our individual plans for better school and public library cooperation in rural America than doing what we are doing right now--spending these two days sharing ideas with each other of successful and some not so successful ventures that we have experienced in our "unique corners of the library world." I challenge each of you to develop and implement a cooperative plan that meets the library and information needs of your respective library users. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this great cooperative venture!