

THE SCHOOL AND THE LIBRARY ¹

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It gives me great pleasure to appear before this gathering as the representative of the National Education Association. I do not know what qualifications are ordinarily sought in such a representative, but I judge that two are at least permitted. First, one must be unable to attend the meetings of the National Education Association itself, because it is so far away; and second, one must be supplied with a liberal lack of knowledge of library science. Whatever the qualifications of the representative it is an easy task to say to the Library Association that there is a close bond connection and sympathy between the two associations. We who teach cannot do the work of the schools without recognizing our dependence on the work that is being done in the community by the library; and I venture to assume that you feel the reciprocal relations yourselves and recognize the importance of a good school in a city where you conduct a good library.

If I make an effort to comment in any wise upon library matters I shall have to confine myself to those aspects of library work which have to do directly with school organization. I am not competent to speak on your larger problems of the library and the community. But certain it is that we are developing within the schools themselves more work of the type in which you are interested.

There are two general lines of discussion and interest which it seems to me proper for one who is interested primarily in the school to present to those of you who are interested primarily in libraries. First, let me say that we are coming to see that the study period in the school is more and more the

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place where the kind of work that you do in the libraries can very properly be introduced and enlarged. All of you know from your own personal experiences as students if not from your experiences as teachers—and I am sure many of you have had this latter form of experience—that the period when students are supposed to study has heretofore been a period when they have been separated from everything except a single textbook or possibly the small supply of books that they could have in their desks, and then they have been called upon to be extremely quiet while they studied. They have been called upon to obey the directions of someone in charge of the study room and the function of that person in charge of the study room has been a rather trying function; it has been the function of keeping order in the room, not the function of contributing in any lively way to the actual educational progress of the school. The study-room period has been a time when the teacher has been allowed to catch up with her reports or to catch up with some needed work and perhaps at times to catch up with her personal correspondence. At all events, it has been an occasion when the intellectual contact between the school and the children has been somewhat curtailed and the school is not supposed to be wholly responsible for anything except order. It has been a partial substitute for home study, the assumption being that the home study would not be done so vigorously because nobody at home would be delegated to watch with equal care over the reluctant studier. Today we are modifying all this and many of us are interested in seeing it further modified. I am sure that it is appropriate for me to enlist if I can the sympathies of this association for the modification of that sort of a study hour in the schools. I think the ideal study hour is a study hour in a room filled with books exactly as any reference library is filled with books. I think the kind of order which should prevail in that room is the kind of order that prevails in any well-organized library; the student should have the opportunity to leave his individual desk and refer to the books which give him enlarged information; he ought indeed to be encouraged to leave his own desk

with its meager supply of books and he ought to go from shelf to shelf within any limits of reasonable attack upon the subject in hand. It seems to me there is the finest kind of an opportunity for training of a type of study that is not common in the individual recitation room. As a matter of fact we are doing more and more of this sort of thing in the individual recitation room; we are asking children to bring into the elementary schools and we are asking the older students to bring into their high-school classes reports of what they have looked up in the libraries, and we are encouraging them to go in a larger way to the shelves; but if we could give them definite training in how to do this, if we could have the teacher who goes about the study room engaged not merely in keeping order but in helping the students to refer to books, giving them a kind of training which we all of us recommend as important, giving them a kind of training for which heretofore no individual officer of the school has been set apart,—I say if we could make these study periods genuine periods of training in the use of books, in the use of a library, it seems to me we should add, without encumbering the course of study, a very important line of training. We should thus reduce watching and keeping order to their proper place of minor importance and elevate to its proper place of major importance the function of using many books. In other words, we should carry over, if you please, a portion of your domain into our domain. We should not only have the schools made the depositories for the books from the public library, but we should have the study period itself transformed into a period of library study or training in library methods.

If this transformation of the study period seems as important to you as it does to me, let me urge upon you the responsibility for contributing to this movement. We cannot work this out merely from the side of the schools; we must have the co-operation of the technical librarian who comes into the school with an idea that is perhaps specialized, perhaps different from the ideas of the ordinary teacher who is acquainted with the ordinary study period. We must have the contribution, from

the side of the librarian, of enthusiasm for this kind of work. We have such a study room as this in one of the schools with which I am connected. It was suggested by our librarian and is being worked out with her co-operation, and we regard it as one of our most progressive lines of organization.

Perhaps you cannot bring about the change suddenly, but you could easily begin to introduce it on a small scale, especially if you are situated near the schools or if you have branches in any of the schools. You might very properly encourage the school authorities themselves to delegate to you the authority to conduct one of these study periods. I know you are busy like the rest of us, and just as soon as I make the proposition that you take over this new task I have no doubt that my suggestion will be received with enthusiasm by school authorities and with corresponding reserve by librarians. My function however is to represent the school authorities. I see, therefore, very clearly how you might make a beginning in some such fashion as this: you might make the proposition that you would take care each day of ten such students for one or two periods. Ten students, you know, are very simple to handle. Students get difficult to handle only when there are fifty of them together and then the accumulated momentum of fifty devices for making a disturbance is so great that you have a disciplinary problem; but the accumulated momentum of ten devices for making a disturbance is relatively very small and any able-bodied librarian, with sufficient self-assurance, can put a check to those ten devices without great difficulty. I should say that it might be well for you to get the school authorities to arrange the program. You can make your period with them very attractive to the children. Suppose you get the school authorities to make the program on a given afternoon that the children should be deliberately let out of a certain school to the number of ten and be allowed to go to the library. Of course children go to the libraries now, but let us arrange this as a deliberate substitute for the old-fashioned study period and let us make this new study period an opportunity for training in the methods of the use of books. If we do this I feel sure we

shall bring together our two institutions in a very productive fashion.

There is another line of interest which I am here to suggest to you. We cannot co-operate intelligently unless we recognize some differentiation of our functions. I do not think it is at all fair to say that the school and the library are doing the same thing. We differ in the first place in the fact that you reach a very much larger community than we can reach in any given year; you reach an older and maturer reading constituency and thereby your function is differentiated from ours in the school. There is another way in which your function differs from ours. Perhaps you have thought this out more clearly than I, perhaps I am bringing coals to Newcastle in suggesting it—but it has always impressed me that you have the advantage of us who teach in the schools in the fact that you use books as wholes and we use books in very small sections. Have you ever been impressed with the fact that when a book is used by a class in a school it takes a year or half a year to read it, and students get notions about the difficulty of going through a book which are altogether distorted; they get the idea that a book must be read in small doses; that when you have finished up one reading you should set that particular reading entirely aside, put it out of your mind as soon as possible so as not to be impeded by any memory which you may have accumulated out of that small section as you pass on to the next? If we have bad habits of this kind in the schools you who work in libraries see the opposite vice. You see people who come in and read a book in fifteen or twenty minutes. Furthermore, you have people among your readers who are mature enough and well trained enough to make rapid reading of a book a virtue. They know how to select. They read the book at the important point and then decide whether they should read the other parts of the book. The art of rapid use of books is one of the arts which we have been learning in the schools very gradually. We are just beginning to see that children can be taught to deal with books as wholes, that they can take up books, not those that we use merely as textbooks, not those that are marked off by

heavy headlines so as to impede progress, but all books containing relevant matter. Children should learn that some books are made for rapid use. Many books ought to be looked over and a large part of the contents, for the moment at any rate, neglected or even discarded. That is, the use of a book as a whole for the purpose of extracting from it some information or for the purpose of getting a broad general view is just as legitimate as the dull grinding over a textbook. We can change the attitude of the next generation toward books, provided we can have some help, and the help which we ought to have, you are in a position to give us. If you would help these students when they come to you to pick out those portions of a book which are of advantage and if you would make it your business, or if you would encourage the teachers in the schools with which you are connected to make it the business of those schools in co-operation with you, to help children to learn the methods of using whole books and extracting the valuable part from books, then we should have a very large addition to our pedagogical machinery. You know what I mean. You ought to have special card catalogues, it seems to me, prepared by teachers and by yourselves which will refer in detail to a number of different books citing chapter and verse, helping out a faulty index or supplementing a good table of contents.

Again, I realize that I am unloading on the Library Association a duty, which if your representative were speaking this morning before the National Education Association he would be unloading on the teacher. Such preaching of new duties is, however, the privilege of a prophet who is far away from his home constituency and in the presence of others who have nothing to do but spend their time on beautiful islands holding conventions. To charge you with any remissness in your duties is certainly not my function this morning, but think of the great catalogues that might have been made up this morning if this whole body had set itself about the business of telling where all of the information could be had about certain phases of fifth-grade geography or history! The trouble with the children when we turn them loose in a general library is that

they have not the machinery for the use of that library; and then—frankly apologizing for that great body which I represent and which is absent today—many of us who teach have not the machinery inside of ourselves, if we wanted to give it to the children. A library is very formidable to a newcomer. Even the material equipment impedes one's progress. I have long wished for an opportunity to tell the makers of card catalogues that they ought to invent an automatic device for turning cards, especially where there are one hundred and fifty on the same subject. Your spiritual equipment I have never doubted, but your material equipment is very difficult to handle and it gets more and more difficult when you offer it to a child in the grades. When you see somebody who is just four feet high confronting a bureau of information that is six feet high, with the top drawers of A's just out of reach, you can realize how that saps the enthusiasm for the use of a library as a source of material related to fourth-grade geography. What we need is material worked over in such a way that pupils will be encouraged from the beginning to realize that the book which is given to them in the classroom is nothing more nor less than a sample and very frequently a meager sample, a sample that raises a great many questions and answers very few. He ought to learn that if the questions thus raised are to be answered they must be answered in the larger book shelves accessible in the libraries. Our duty, and if I may venture to preach, your duty, is to make that path, especially for the early students, very much smoother than it is at the present moment. For my own part I am not at all persuaded that the path hasn't got to be worked out in very much greater detail even for older students. Parents come to us in our schools very frequently asking for lists of books that should be read, lists of books that shall be specifically appropriate to the needs of the boy and the girl in the sixth, seventh, and the eighth grade. This kind of specific preparation of a library to introduce the student to whole books without throwing the whole library at him; to give him the machinery by which he shall be able to extract certain portions of your shelved wis-

dom; to encourage him little by little to expand upon the way in which we use the books in the school—that is someone's general problem. I think we who teach have made the mistake, which I confess very frankly, of tying ourselves down too closely to the single book. We are breaking away from that somewhat. We are trying to get children to use books as wholes, and if you would come at it from your end of the problem, where you deal with the library as a whole, and if you will begin to narrow somewhat the total view, we shall meet each other half way. We shall get our pupils to raise a certain number of questions and then shall push them out into the library to get their questions answered. Thus we shall develop the kind of co-operation which is at all worth cultivation—that co-operation which permits of the differentiation of function. I do not believe libraries are going to swallow up the schools, at least for some time, nor will the schools swallow up the growing institutions which you represent. The school is very hospitable to the movement of introducing into the schools branch libraries; indeed, the school is eager for all possible reciprocity between our two great educational institutions. You reach a larger constituency than we do; you reach your constituency in a somewhat different way. We are trying to prepare the future constituency for the use of these storehouses of knowledge and art of which you are the custodians. If you will give us a little help in working out some of the methods, of which I think we are relatively ignorant; if you will help the students whom we send to you, then we shall be forgiven for meeting apart each year and merely sending representatives back and forth.

The collection which your executive officers have helped to prepare for the National Education Association is, I am sure, highly appreciated by those who are at the other meeting in Boston, and I have the message from the executive officers of the National Education Association extending to you their very hearty and cordial greetings and their hope for future co-operation of the type which has been possible in the past. Long may there be the warmest sympathy between our two great branches of the public educational system.