

### Conclusion

A study of these reports of the public and school libraries in Minneapolis reveals a number of interesting facts.

That the public library was the first to recognize the fertile field of library service to children of elementary school age appears to be indisputably evident. Moreover, the public library initially identified the school as a natural and most advantageous avenue for reaching these children.

Due recognition must be given, therefore, to the public library for this forward look and for their invaluable contribution to the field of recreational reading and thus to the growth and development of children.

Furthermore, one has only to view the development of a dynamic educational program from the vantage point of a library within a school to fully realize the validity of the statement, "The school library is the heart of the school." As the demands for supplementary materials to implement the educational program clamor at the door of the library, the responsive and resourceful librarian cannot resist becoming attune to the ever broadening scope of education.

History further demonstrates that if a library is to be located within a school, the educational program will direct the library, and not the library, the educational program.

Once recognized, it is clear that the furtherance of the educational program is the first and foremost role of the library within a school; indeed, it is the life blood of its existence.

Although it appears that such a role was foreseen by Dr. Herbert Putnam, who in his first annual report in 1890 recognized not only the

reading potential of the early-school-age child but the intimate influences of school teachers in guiding this potential and acquainting the library with the need for related material, one has no way of knowing to what extent he foresaw the unlimited demand that the educational program was to make on the library resources and just what his reaction might have been to the problems it entailed.<sup>238</sup>

The needs of the school struck many a formidable blow on the doors of the public library; time and again the pendulum swung in the direction of a closer relationship and an understanding of educational needs, but the basic philosophies never achieved complete harmony.

One can, for example, review such conflicting statements as the following: In her 1908 report, Miss Bartleson wrote, "It is believed that this new system has broadened our work with the school and laid the foundation for more intelligent and helpful relations between the library and the public school. . ." She further regarded the work with the schools ". . . as quite the most important part of the library's work with children."<sup>239</sup>

And the following comment from the 1911 report, "We do not attempt in any way to furnish supplementary reading, but simply to reach the children with good readable books which they can enjoy. . ."<sup>240</sup>

One can cite example after example of this struggle on the part of the public library to define its own role; but through it all, the dominant strain seemed to be that their major premise was to fulfill the recreational reading needs of children.

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<sup>238</sup>See pp. 2-3.

<sup>239</sup>See p. 10.

<sup>240</sup>See p. 12.

On the other hand, one cannot but be impressed with the slow awakening on the part of the school administration to its responsibilities in furthering this vital need in their educational program. One can readily sympathize with the public library in the futility of their frequent pleas for the school administration to carry their share in this enterprise. It was not until about 1915 that the school board demonstrated its interest in the program by incorporating school libraries in their building plans for elementary schools.<sup>241</sup>

History also reveals another strong benefactor in the promotion and support of the school library: the P.T.A. Libraries provide an attractive project for these groups and their contributions toward their growth and development in some school districts has been immeasurable. One must reiterate, however, that valuable as their contributions may be, the duties of lay people must of necessity be limited to financial and clerical areas; an untrained lay person can no more undertake the professional duties of a librarian than he can assume those of the classroom teacher.

It seems indisputable that to fulfill its role in the education of today's child, the elementary school must have its own library, centrally located within the building, focusing its services on the needs of the school, and so staffed and administered as to become an integral part of a dynamic educational program.

This is a full-time job and to be effectively done must be administered by people trained and experienced in the field of education. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect the public library to recognize and meet these needs; after all the demands of the public must be one of their first concerns.

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<sup>241</sup>See p. 14.

If this be true, it seems inevitable that the responsibility for the school library program should be assumed by the board of education; it may be as unreasonable for the schools to expect the public library to carry the educational responsibility of the library program as it would be for them to expect the park board to administer and staff the physical education program.

In all probability today's society does have need for both institutions: the school library and the public library, working hand in hand to be sure, but independent in administration and major emphases.