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ABSTRACT

The document serves two purposes: to describe the planning process, staffing, materials, organization, and results of the Austin (Texas) Learning Center-Library Pilot Project; and to provide guidance to those who wish to develop similar programs and adult learning centers in their communities. The report describes the Austin experience, together with recommendations that can be generalized to other communities interested in establishing a library-learning center, under the following headings: goals, locating the facility, personnel needs (detailing the functions and responsibilities of both the library and teaching staffs), staffing and scheduling, the instructional program, equipment needs, recruitment and publicity, an advisory committee, and cost estimates for establishing a library-learning center. Experience with the Austin project has shown that the library can serve as a viable instrument in furthering the education of adults. Forms used at the Austin Adult Learning Center are appended, with comments on their use. (Author/NH)

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ESTABLISHING
ADULT
LEARNING
CENTERS
IN COMMUNITY LIBRARIES

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FOREWORD

This document was written to serve two purposes: to describe the planning process, staffing, materials, organization, and results of the Austin Learning Center-Library Pilot Project; and to provide guidance to those who wish to develop similar programs in their communities. Details of our experiences with the Austin project are given and followed by recommendations that can be generalized to other communities.

The Texas State Library, the Austin Public Library, the Texas Education Agency, and the Industrial and Business Training Bureau of the Division of Extension, The University of Texas at Austin, combined efforts to produce this report.

INTRODUCTION

Although libraries since their beginning have been interested in the education of adults and more specifically in the reading skills of adults, their active participation in programs of adult education is recent and still not widespread. However, previous nonparticipation in adult education has not been due to a lack of suitability of the library to this type of program. To the contrary, a neighborhood library offers several unique advantages as a location for an adult learning center:

1. Generally speaking, the casual informal atmosphere of a branch library is at the same time more flexible and less threatening for adult students than other institutional settings such as high school classrooms.
2. Because the library is an information resource center, various information materials useful in the instructional program are readily available to students and teachers.
3. In the library, students are made aware of library services and are encouraged to continue their own self-education.
4. From a practical standpoint, a neighborhood library is usually within walking distance of potential clientele. This is especially good in poorer areas where transportation is often a problem.

The following is a guide to establishing a library-learning center based on the experiences of the Austin Library Project. However, because the Austin program was developed as a satellite to the Austin Adult Learning Center, this guide is not detailed in methods of organizing and administering a learning center from its inception. Further information on this subject may be found in *How to Establish an Adult Learning Center*.¹

¹ The University of Texas at Austin, Division of Extension, *How to Establish an Adult Learning Center* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas, 1971).

GOALS

In establishing an adult learning center in a public library, a major consideration is to direct the total program—both the library and the instructional services—to the needs of the people in that community. It is important to recognize and work toward the students' own goals, which broadly involve a hope for a better life. Specific program goals may be defined in terms of the particular population, but general objectives will in large part be the same for most library-education programs. The general objectives may be:

1. to provide an opportunity for educationally disadvantaged or non-English speaking adults, through provision of materials and instruction;
2. to familiarize members of the community with library services and materials so that the library might contribute to their own self-education and free-time reading enjoyment, and
3. to acquire or assist in acquiring sufficient reading materials at lower reading levels that will be relevant and interesting to adults

An annotated and evaluated bibliography of library materials (including filmstrips and cassettes) purchased by the Austin project for students at all levels is available from The University of Texas, Division of Extension, Extension Building 103, Austin, Texas 78712.

LOCATING THE FACILITY

The library-learning center concept is probably best suited to community outreach efforts. It is preferable to locate in small neighborhood libraries rather than downtown, in order to serve those groups whose needs are largely unmet by a centralized learning facility. In terms of recruiting and need for the program, the most profitable areas are those that are not currently being served by other adult education programs. Several points worthy of consideration in determining

the particular facility or facilities in which to establish a center are

1. that a library in a densely populated area will attract and retain students more readily (conversely, a sprawling community with no center of activity will present difficulties in attracting students);
2. that the library must have adequate space to serve a student group and its regular patrons as well, without either group disturbing the other; and
3. that because the library will be operating as an information resource center, a collection strong in reference and nonfiction is necessary.

PERSONNEL NEEDS

Library Staff

Most library-learning centers will function cooperatively with two staffs—the branch library staff and the teaching staff. The two groups share a common goal, that of encouraging continuing adult self-education; and through a unified effort, they can do much toward achieving it. To this end, the branch library must be staffed during all hours of program operation with personnel who are able to suggest and find books and handle reference questions. To a great extent, the success of the program is dependent on active participation of both groups involved. Thus, it is the responsibility of the branch library head to insure that each member of his staff—

1. understands the goals of adult basic education and the problems peculiar to teaching adults;
2. is familiar with policy regarding participation in adult education and is able to answer all requests for information regarding the program; and
3. recognizes the need to urge students to realize what the library might do for them and encourage them to utilize its services.

An introduction to the instructional material with an explanation of the reading levels should be provided for all library staff members so that they can help students find supplementary reading material. Additionally, there must be some qualified librarian who can devote a portion of his time to the determining and ordering of library materials with the adult student in mind. (In Austin a full-time librarian was hired to work with all of the library-learning centers.)

Teaching Staff

The teaching staff of each library-learning center should include a professional instructor and one or more paraprofessionals (teacher's aides), depending on need. It is the responsibility of the instructor to plan and direct both individual and group learning activities. He should be aware of and examine the various materials available and select what is best suited to the needs of his students. The instructor will also supervise and determine activities for the paraprofessional. In addition to professional training, the instructor should have some experience with adults and be bilingual if working in communities where there is a large non-English speaking element. An ability to develop rapport with both co-workers and students is essential.

Under the supervision of the coordinator and the instructor (see organization chart of the Austin Library Project, page 8), the paraprofessional will assist with students and with the mechanics of the program, such as record-keeping (for a discussion of useful records to keep, see appendix page 18). An important part of the paraprofessional's job should be in the area of recruitment. One-fourth to one-third of his time may be spent in visiting door-to-door, making potential students aware of the program, and answering their questions. The paraprofessional, like the instructor, should be bilingual when necessary and have a good relationship with others in the program.

Where an organization operates more than one library-learning center or other adult learning facility, it will be

necessary to have a coordinator. This person must also have professional training in education and will be responsible for supervising and coordinating the teachers and the instructional program.

The coordinator of the program must have knowledge in all areas of adult education and have professional training in both education and supervision. The ultimate success of the program is his responsibility. Some of his specific jobs include—

1. selection of qualified staff;
2. determination of appropriate location for each center; and
3. acquisition and management of funds.

Staff effectiveness in adult education may be increased through the use of volunteer tutors. The services of volunteers can be a great asset if there is some method of coordinating the needs of the program with the capacity in which each volunteer can work. Through the use of volunteers, several things can be accomplished:

1. Students may receive additional individual instruction.
2. Volunteers receive free training and experience in the use of educational materials, and in some cases, in teaching English as a second language.
3. Often, more special subject areas or services can be offered within the program.

Types of activities in which volunteers can be used to advantage include—

1. individual tutoring in special subject areas, such as algebra or spelling;
2. making audiovisual presentations to small groups of students and initiating a discussion afterwards;
3. special enrichment programs or short-term classes in such areas as budgeting or filing income tax returns; and
4. home tutoring for students who are unable to come to the learning center, which includes helping students with problems they are having in their home study.

discussing readings with them, and taking them books from the library.

Volunteers should receive appropriate training just as paid staff members do. Also, with the rest of the teaching staff, they should be made aware of all the services the library can offer the public and be instructed in the mechanics of checking out books and handling reference questions. It is the responsibility of everyone involved to encourage students to make use of the library services.

STAFFING AND SCHEDULING

Staff needed will vary with the hours of operation and the primary type of instruction offered; but, at each center, one qualified teacher must always be present. In a program of individualized instruction, students work independently unless they have a problem. In a typical ABE situation, a teacher and paraprofessional can usually handle about twenty students. Students learning English require so much attention under the individualized approach, that the Austin project has initiated the use of mini-classes in the Canadian Street Center, where nearly all of the students are trying to learn English. Where this type of group exists, they will often make up a proportionately larger percentage of the student population than they do of the population of educationally disadvantaged as a whole. As a group, English language students are seemingly more motivated than ABE students. This may be due either to the comradeship that exists between people learning English or to the fact that they are better able to recognize their need and the reward at the end than the ABE students.

No formula can be strictly applied to the staffing and scheduling of library-learning centers; the requirements for each will vary with the character and people of the particular community. For example, with regard to staff, it has been found that in an area made up predominantly of one ethnic group, it is best to have the teacher or the aide or both

from that ethnic group also. The use of Catholic church facilities lends itself as an example on the subject of difficult scheduling. If the church schedules bingo regularly on a given night in a Mexican-American neighborhood, there is no point in an educational program even trying to compete. The importance of surveying the target area before making any commitments as to hours, staff, or indeed, whether to have the program at all, cannot be overstressed.

Daytime hours are useful only where there are a lot of people without jobs, or who stay home during the day. However, if many of the students are housewives (and they often are), with housework, no transportation, and children to look after, there is a strong chance that they will not come. Most of the potential students will have daytime jobs and thus be free only in the evenings. Again, it is important to study the target area before establishing a daytime program to be sure that there will be enough students to make it worthwhile. With hours from 1:00 to 9:00 p.m. in one center (see organization chart, page 8), the Austin project has experienced a daytime peak at around 1:30 p.m. and an evening peak from about 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., with evenings much busier than afternoons.

As an example, the full staffing and scheduling of the Austin program is illustrated on the following page. Staff members included in that program are as follows:

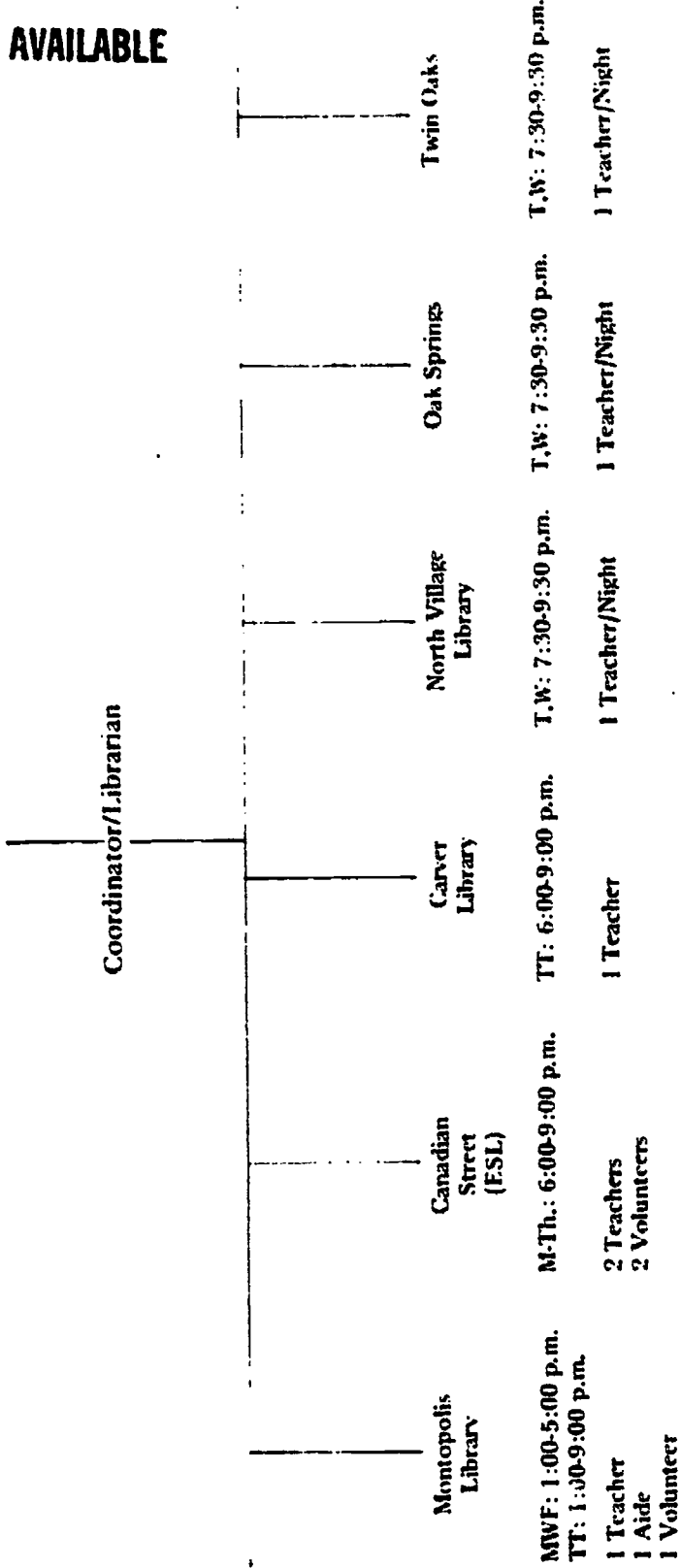
- Director
- Coordinator
- One full-time librarian-teacher
- Full-time teacher
- Full-time aide
- Two part-time teachers
- Ten part-time volunteers

THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

The success of the library-learning center will greatly depend on the type and quality of the instructional program

Austin Learning Center—Library Program Organization

ABE PROGRAM DIRECTOR



Note: This is a partial organization chart and does not show all the programs for which the director and coordinator are responsible.

and materials. Individualized instruction is widely considered the best approach to use with adults. Students may work at their own level and their own speed without any fear of competition. Furthermore, the instruction may be varied to meet the needs of particular students without affecting the others. A semiprogrammed instructional series enables students to work on their own and usually to check their own work. Teachers and aides are always available when a student needs help. The one exception to use of the individualized approach involves students learning English. When possible, it has been found that the mini-group approach combined with individual work has the best results with this group.

The Austin Library Project divides students into four groups: levels A, B, C, and students learning English as a second language. Materials are selected in terms of what will best meet the needs of the students at each level. The fact that the approach is individualized means that a student may be at the appropriate point within a level rather than at the beginning. A student coming to a library-learning center for the first time is greeted by one of the staff members and engaged in conversation. To as great an extent as possible, information is gathered regarding the student's background, probable level, goals for himself, and so forth. The student's level when he enters the program is more precisely determined by his ability to fill out an information sheet (see appendix, page 23), rather than by his performance on a test.

Level A students (grades 1-3) work primarily with the *Mott Basic Language Skills Program*,² which at its most fundamental level, teaches the student to read a page from left to right and from top to bottom. The series progresses through sight and sound recognition of the alphabet, writing, comprehension, vocabulary development, and grammar. A word attack skills book can be used to determine a student's level and where in the series he needs to begin. The program is semiprogrammed in approach, providing the student with

² Allied Educational Council, *Mott Basic Language Skills Program* (Gallen, Michigan).

immediate feedback and reinforcement. At the lower levels the Language Master is used as an aid to learning the alphabet and vocabulary. The *Noonan-Spradley Series*³ is used at this level to teach recognition and understanding of numbers and basic computational skills ranging from addition to percent. The program includes tests and answer sheets. Both the Mott and the Noonan-Spradley material are designed for adults. They introduce simple skills without depending on cartoons or childish examples for illustration.

At the B level (grades 4-5) students continue developing their vocabulary and mathematical skills. Punctuation, parts of speech, and other grammatical constructions are studied, and reading comprehension becomes a point of emphasis. The workbooks at this level are also from the Mott Series and the Noonan-Spradley program. Extra help in math, which is the most difficult subject for most students, is provided by the publication, *Basic Essentials of Mathematics, Parts 1 & 2*.⁴ Filmstrips and cassettes are used as an added means of illustrating grammar and math rules and for comprehension of ideas in special subject areas, such as science and social studies. (Filmstrips and cassettes used are listed in the previously mentioned bibliography developed through this program.) As a practical exercise, students are sometimes given activities with sections or articles from the newspaper to read or interpret.

The goal of the student at the C level (grades 6-8) is usually the successful completion of the General Education Development Test. At this stage, the student is reading extensively at advanced levels in different subject areas. A great deal of the work at the C level involves reading comprehension in science, social studies, and literature. Advanced math and grammar continue. Two series that have been found particularly helpful in meeting the needs of the C

³ Allied Educational Council, *Noonan-Spradley Diagnostic Program of Computational Skills* (Galien, Michigan).

⁴ James T. Shea, *Basic Essentials of Mathematics, Parts 1 & 2* (Austin, Texas: Steck-Vaughn Company, 1965).

level student are the *Cambridge Pre-GED Program*⁵ and the *Cowles GED Program*.⁶

Students learning English, who are already literate in Spanish are placed in one of the five levels of the *Lado English Series*,⁷ depending on their knowledge of English. The material provides both oral and written practice and includes explanations of progressively more difficult grammatical constructions. For language students who are not literate, instruction is begun with the basic level of the Mott material. Language records, the Language Master, and language cassettes are all used to advantage with ESL students.

In addition to the instructional material, a collection of library materials was purchased by the Austin Library Project, especially for adult education students. Some of the books are supplementary to the instructional program while others are of general interest or for pleasure reading. (Most of this material is listed and annotated in the previously mentioned bibliography.) It is advantageous to students to participate in some extra reading as it increases their vocabulary and comprehension skills, which compose a major portion of the high school equivalency exam.

EQUIPMENT

Although the individualized instructional approach is based primarily on the use of books and workbooks, some equipment may be helpful. Any piece of equipment is, of

⁵ Angelica W. Cass, *Cambridge Pre-GED Program* (New York: Cambridge Book Co., 1972).

⁶ *Cowles GED Program*, Cowles Book Company, 1970. *Correctness and Effectiveness of Expression, General Mathematical Ability, Interpretation of Reading Materials in the Social Studies, Interpretation of Reading Materials in the Natural Sciences, Interpretation of Literary Materials.*

⁷ Robert Lado, *Lado English Series, Books 1-5* (Regents Publishing Company, 1970).

course, useful only to the extent that there are students with problems that will be helped by use of the equipment. Equipment used successfully by the Austin Library Project includes the following:

1. The Language Master Audio-Visual Instructional System, which allows student participation in prerecorded lesson materials. The student listens to the instructor on one track and then records on the other. This program is most helpful in teaching the English language, vocabulary, and the alphabet.
2. Individual filmstrip viewers and cassette player/recorders, which can be used with students at higher levels for reading and comprehension. More advanced language students can use the cassettes for recording longer passages than allowed by the Language Master.
3. A slide projector or movie projector may be useful with small groups that are studying the same thing.

RECRUITMENT AND PUBLICITY

An organized and continuous plan for recruitment and publicity is necessary on behalf of the library-learning center. Most of the people the program will be trying to contact will not be library users, so an outreach effort is needed. It is important that these activities be continuous because the transient nature of much of the population causes a constant influx of new people. Furthermore, experience has indicated that most people will not pay much attention to what they hear about the program until they are in a position to seriously consider it. The primary purpose of the recruitment program should be to acquire a paraprofessional who can visit door-to-door, explaining the program. Other staff should also participate in this visitation as time permits. House-to-house visiting will provide an opportunity to survey the potential client's needs and wants in terms of the library and the education program.

The following supplemental methods of publicity should be used simultaneously and regularly:

1. Fliers should be frequently distributed in the appropriate neighborhoods.
2. Posters should be placed at strategic locations around all learning centers.
3. Radio, television, and newspaper coverage should be arranged and utilized as often as possible.
4. Churches and social agencies—such as day care, community schools, neighborhood centers, welfare agencies, and so forth—should be informed of the availability of the program.

As the program expands, students will contact other potential students.

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

An advisory committee can be established at any of several points during the planning and implementation of this library-learning center, but it will probably be of most use after the center has actually begun operation. At this stage of development, the committee members will have more to react to. The main ways in which the advisory committee can be of service are--

1. to act as a liaison between the education program and the people of the community;
2. to recommend services and activities needed in the communities and to suggest how they might be accomplished; and
3. to suggest ways to reach people in the community.

Persons to serve on the advisory committee might include--

1. education personnel;
2. library personnel;
3. community residents;

4. representatives from relevant businesses and public service agencies; and
5. ABE students.

**COST ESTIMATES FOR ESTABLISHING
A LIBRARY-LEARNING CENTER
(Six Locations)**

The following cost estimate is based on the experiences of the Austin Library Project and will vary depending on resources available or standard salaries in a given community. In Austin, the public library provided space free of charge and also staffed the library during hours of program operation.

Staff

Librarian full-time	\$ 7,700/12 month year
Instructor- full-time	\$ 7,700/12 month year
2 Instructors part-time	\$ 5,040/12 month year
Paraprofessional -full-time	\$ 4,000/12 month year
TOTAL.	<u>\$24,440</u>

Materials

Instructional (ESL and ABE)	\$ 3,000
Library-related	\$ 7,000
TOTAL.	<u>\$10,000</u>

(Library materials for students may be found in the general collection if there are insufficient funds available to purchase a special collection.)

Equipment

2 Language Masters @ \$250.00 each	\$500.00
1 slide filmstrip projector	\$ 22.50
2 individual filmstrip viewers @ \$35.95 each	\$ 71.90
2 cassette player/recorders @ \$29.95 each	\$ 55.90
TOTAL	<u>\$654.30</u>

Publicity. To as great an extent as possible, free publicity should be arranged as advertising costs are very high in all the media. Radio stations will usually provide free public service announcements upon request. Of course, they choose the time. Usually newspapers will do articles on items of current interest.

Although they are not free, fliers are a source of inexpensive publicity. For a slight charge, depending on availability of duplicating equipment, fliers may be copied and distributed door-to-door by recruiters.

SUMMARY

Experience with the Austin Library Project has shown that the library can serve as a viable instrument in furthering the education of adults. Because of its facilities as a resource center, the library can greatly enhance educational programs, such as the ones described here. For those who contemplate the development of a program similar to the Austin Library Project, the main points to remember are as follows:

1. The Austin Library Project operates in several branch libraries rather than one central location. Branch libraries, because they tend to cater to the special interests of the neighborhoods in which they are located, are ideally suited for establishing library-learning centers. Although an attempt to establish a learning center in a central library might well meet with success, careful attention will have to be given to the purposes of the educational program and to the clientele toward which the program is directed.
2. Scheduling would seem to be of great importance to the success of a planned library-learning center. The Austin experience indicates that, at least for our clientele, a program that does not operate at night would fail. This, of course, might not be the case for a city who had

certain kinds of people who could attend during the day. In any case, a careful survey should be made regarding the optimum times for program operation.

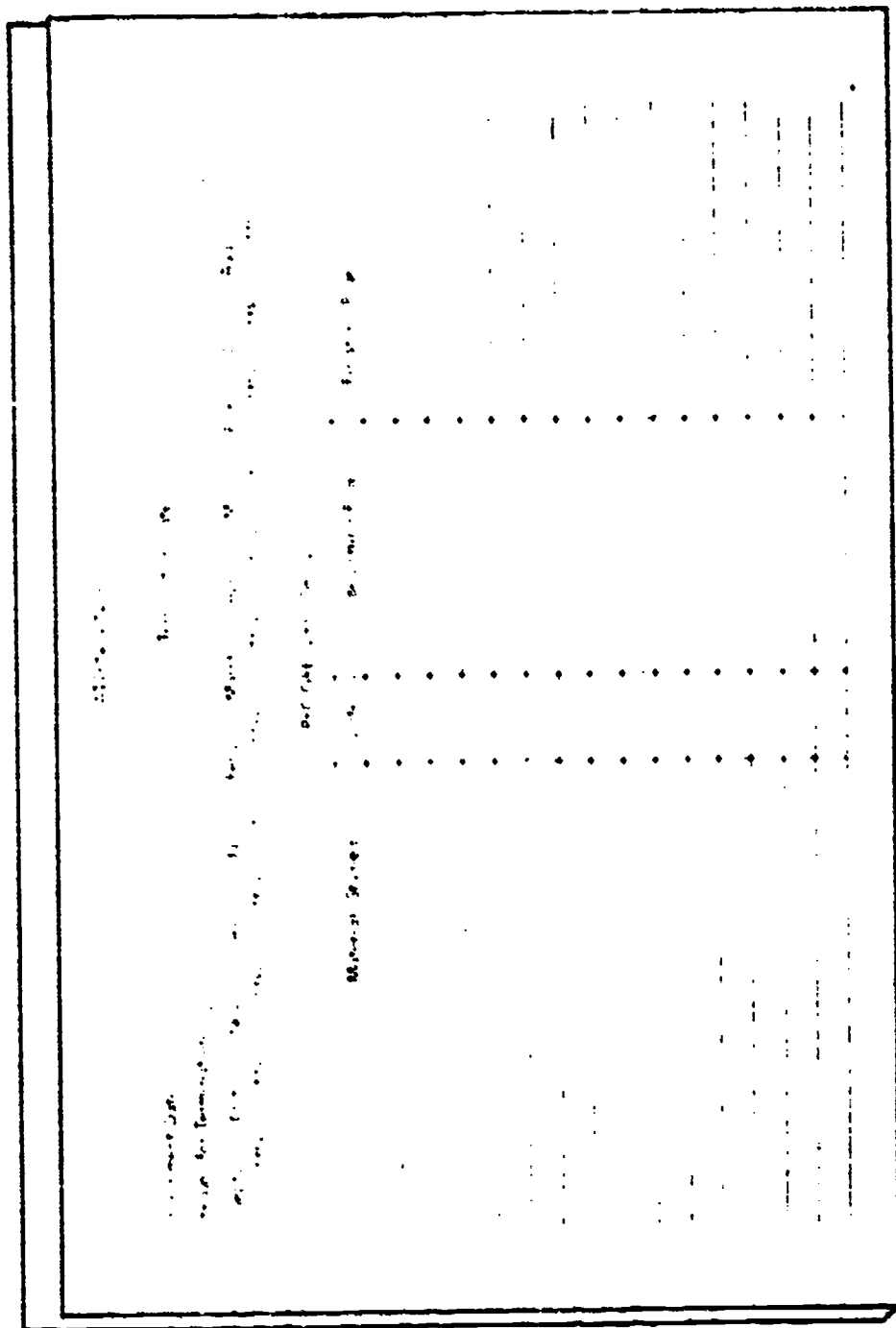
3. The library staff must be well-informed about program objectives and must cooperate with instructional staff in order for the library-learning center concept to have a chance for success. A library can be an imposing or even a forbidding place to the people we want to reach with the library-learning center programs. Library and instructional staff must work together to establish a relaxed, nonthreatening atmosphere.
4. Routine procedures for continuous recruitment of new students and follow-up of dropouts must be established in order for the program to have continuing success. This requirement is not unique to the library-learning center but is necessary for any ABE or similar enterprise.
5. Wherever possible, conclusions have been drawn and recommendations have been made that are applicable to any community. However, the way in which a library-learning center operates is very sensitive to the characteristics of a particular community and to the nature of the proposed clientele. A survey of these characteristics is strongly recommended as a first step toward implementing such a program.

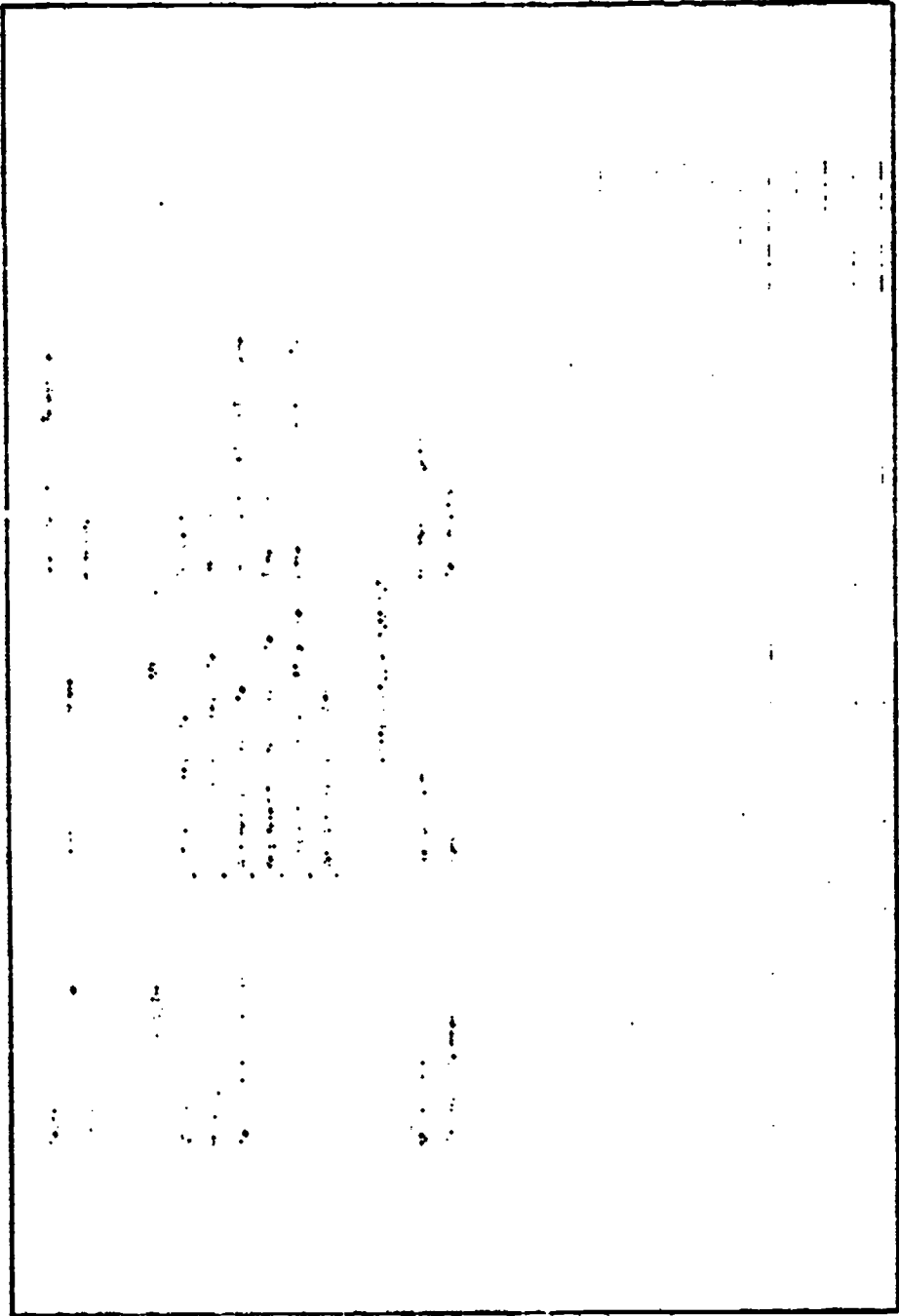
APPENDIX

THE RECORD FOLDER

The record folder shown on the following two pages was developed by the Austin Adult Learning Center staff in an effort to combine in one location, information useful to ABE teachers and information required by the Texas Education Agency regarding all of their projects. Ideally, a teacher can determine almost at a glance everything he needs to know about a student even if he has never worked with that student.

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THE INFORMATION SHEET

During the early months of 1969, it was felt that the placement tests that were being used at the ABF Learning Center in Austin were inadequate for initial placement. The existing tests, W.R.A.L., and the Standard Oral Reading Paragraphs test, were exceedingly slow and cumbersome, and for our purposes, inaccurate. A new test, it was unanimously felt by the staff, was needed: one that would give an immediate and at least generally accurate placement; one that would be quickly evaluated; and equally important, one that would not cause anxiety or hostility on the part of the student.

The staff undertook to write such a placement instrument. It was felt that several things might as well be accomplished at once, and the test was devised so that the student would feel that he was filling out an application questionnaire, rather than taking an examination. A considerable amount of information is necessary in order to complete each student's file folder, so questions relating to the file-folder information were used as the basis for the placement instrument. At a later time, the student's instructor or the teacher-aide can transfer the information from the placement instrument to the file.

Briefly, the rationale for the placement instrument is as follows: if the student can read or write at all, then the questions coming under the *A* section can most likely be answered. If the student goes no further than the *A* section, then obviously he is an *A*-level student and should be placed in the appropriate work-texts. If a student forges ahead into the *B* section but fades before he finishes, he should be placed in the terminal *A* group or into the low *B*-section material. If the student goes straight through the *B* group, answering the questions as they stand with accurate and clear answers, then clearly he should be placed into the top end of the *B* group with *C*-level material ready for him. If the

student sweeps right on into the C-level questions and answers them correctly without misspellings, bad punctuation or grammar, and has understandable responses that are pertinent to the questions, then the student should be placed in GED preparatory material and readied for the GED tests or proceed with the GED tests.

The placement instrument accomplishes at least three purposes simultaneously: it offers a gross placement for the incoming student, it accumulates necessary information for the student's information file, it puts the student at ease in the sense that the student feels that he is still in the preliminary stages of his enrollment and is not yet under stress. Also, the instrument gives the instructor a good beginning for judging the student's usable vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and reading ability. All of this information is valuable in setting up a program of individualized instruction for the student.

INFORMATION SHEET

A

1. Write or print your name _____
2. What is your address? _____
3. What is the date today? _____
4. Do you have a telephone? _____
What is the number? _____
5. Are you married? _____ What is your husband's
name (or wife's name)? _____
6. When is your birthday? _____
7. When were you born? _____

B

1. Are you a citizen of the United States? _____
2. Are you a citizen by birth or by naturalization? _____
3. Do you maintain private transportation? _____
4. If so, what type? _____
5. Do you possess a valid driver's license? _____
6. What is your ethnic origin? _____
7. Are you a registered voter in the state of Texas? _____

8. If you are presently employed, please indicate whether you are employed on a full-time or a part-time basis.

9. How long have you worked for your present employer on the job that you now hold?

10. Do you subscribe to an Austin newspaper?

11. Do you subscribe to other newspapers or magazines?

12. If so, please list them.

13. Do you own (or have ready access to) a television set?

14. Do you own a radio, or is one available to you?

15. Please answer the following questions with either *fine*, *good*, *fair*, *poor*, or *bad*.
 - a. How is your vision?
 - b. How is your hearing?
 - c. How is your general health?

16. Please write in words the number of times you estimate that you visit the doctor each year:

17. How did you learn about this program?

C

1. Please write a brief and pertinent paragraph explaining how you were made aware of this program:

2. Please write a paragraph telling the aspirations that you have that you feel can be enhanced or furthered by the program that you are now beginning.

3. Please write a paragraph about yourself as you see yourself. You may reiterate the information that you have already given in the above paragraph.

4. Give me the information that you feel will be most helpful in aiding an instructor who is trying to prepare a program of instruction suited to your particular needs.
