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ABSTRACT

Ways in which academic libraries can contribute to strengthening the educational system are examined, and obstacles to be overcome or circumvented are considered. Primary focus is on the generic academic library. An overview is presented on what is known about libraries and learning, and the use of library resources. Several seminal studies are cited on the use of libraries by the college population and on attempts to develop educational programs based upon close cooperation between librarians and college faculty. The successes and failures of library services for educationally disadvantaged students are discussed, and some recommendations are made for improving special library services to students in need of remedial aid. Suggestions are made on how campus libraries can take the initiative in sponsoring programs designed to improve the understanding and use of information related tools or in co-sponsoring activities with colleges of education, extension agencies, or local public library facilities. (JD)

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
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A NATION AT RISK

"Stemming the Tide" of Mediocrity
The Academic Library Response

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A NATION AT RISK

"Stemming the Tide" of Mediocrity
The Academic Library Response

by Richard M. Dougherty

We are nation a with a long history and tradition for social concern. But we are also a nation whose values and beliefs in recent years have been sorely tested by a series of social, military and economic shocks.

The rise of rock and roll and its symbolic leader Elvis Presley for many adults portended a national moral decline. These critics conveniently forgot about the Black Bottom and the Charleston of their own generation, but in retrospect the rock and roll generation seems to have been one symptom of a nation that was losing its sense of direction.

In the sixties the civil rights movement tugged at the conscience of a nation that did not want to believe it could have been so inhumane in its treatment of thirteen million Americans. And the Vietnam War culminating with the Cambodian excursion came close to tearing apart the seams of our social fabric. OPEC's oil embargo of the mid seventies proved that we were no longer economically self-sufficient. And if the power of OPEC to manipulate our economy wasn't enough, the Japanese proved they could also out-perform their American industrial counterparts by building better automobiles and electronic devices. Watergate further undermined our confidence in those who govern us.

The turbulence of the last twenty years undeniably has tested our resolve, self-esteem and confidence as a nation. Now we are told that our vaunted educational system may be in disarray and we are about to be engulfed in a "rising tide of mediocrity." Little wonder so many people would like to return to the more placid, affluent Eisenhower years. This desire to return to

a better time is reflected in a Merle Haggard lament, "Are the good times over for good?" Haggard yearns for the day when a "coke was a cola" and a "joint was a bad place to be." He asks, "Are we going down hill like a snowball to hell, are the good times over for good?" There are many doomsayers among us decrying the educational malaise, frequently they know very little but the critics are many and vocal.

I agree with Ernest Boyers's view ". . . that today America has the best opportunity it will have in this century to improve the schools."[1] The problems and the challenges have been documented in a series of reports on the status of education. What we need is to accept a challenge similar to President Kennedy's challenge that we place a man on the moon by the end of the sixties. We spent billions creating and harnessing new technologies and building a new industrial infrastructure to manage the space program. Education responded to the post-Sputnik era by creating an education establishment that is still the envy of many countries. We can't return to a simpler day, but we can accept the challenge to stem the rush toward educational mediocrity.

Who is to Blame?

In my judgment, the symptoms of decline are readily evident. Persistent declines in test scores, the growing ranks of marginally literate graduates, the crowded classrooms of students seeking remedial English and math, even at our nation's most prestigious colleges and universities are but a few of the most visible symptoms. There seems to be little disagreement that the problem is real, there is less agreement on who or what is to blame. We all have our own favorite candidates for scapegoat: selfish labor unions, hide-bound school

administrators, apathetic teachers, disinterested parents, a rootless society, insensitive politicians, or pernicious taxpayers. The list of culprits could be extended so no group in society is blameless. We are all part of the problem.

The At Risk report struck a responsive chord among parents of school-age children. But we should be sensitive to the feelings of those who have labored in our schools and classrooms, often under severe handicaps in recent years. Parents are unhappy with the quality of education their children receive, but few are in a position to understand what has gone wrong or what to do to in order to reverse the decline. They can only vent their frustration by voting down school tax millages or by transferring their children to private schools. These acts stem feelings of anger and a sense of helplessness. Neither, unfortunately, contributes to a constructive solution. And too often the classroom teacher becomes the focus of local parental frustration.

Teachers and school administrators have justification if they react differently to the current wave of criticism. Administrators feel hamstrung by confining contracts, rules and regulations; teachers feel they are underpaid and not appreciated, they often feel under seige; at the least they are unable to maintain classroom discipline, at worst they fear for their personal safety. And their students, teachers are repeatedly reminded, are only marginally prepared to function in an adult society.

There is really no answer to the question, "who is to blame?" And while nothing will be solved with finger pointing, it is an unavoidable reaction which might also serve as a catharsis for releasing the pent up anger and frustration. Once the initial anger has subsided, we can begin to forge an

instrument of national policy. Although non-partisan, the At Risk report is essentially a political statement; it describes a real problem. This is the first positive step toward a solution, for only an aroused citizenry can lead to a national commitment to rebuild our educational system and lead the nation's education sector from its present malaise.

The At Risk report sets the stage for action. Now we must define the current problem even more sharply, establish priorities, and outline a series of actions that first stems the tide that threatens to engulf us and second, reverses that tide by restoring the long tradition of each succeeding generation being educated better than the last.

I have not yet mentioned the word "academic library." This is not an accident. The erosion in the quality of education is not due to a decline in libraries or library services. Rather, this absence of attention reflects the reality that libraries are not judged central to the current problem. The problem is one of deficiencies in basic skills such as reading and writing. It is secondary school educators and not librarians who are trained to teach these skills. Realistically speaking, one cannot hope to promote an acceptance of a lifelong learning habit to a person who is struggling to complete a job application form. Nonetheless, there are important roles for school, public and academic librarians. As we develop our roles we should make every effort to orchestrate our activities with the work of teachers, administrators, college faculty and university officials. To be successful, to make an impact on students, we must be in the mainstream of activity.

Scope of the Paper

In this paper I will suggest ways in which libraries can contribute to strengthening our educational system and identify several obstacles that must be overcome or circumvented in order to succeed. While there may be differences between the responses that a research library, college library, or community college library might make, I will focus primarily on the generic academic library in order to minimize distinctions which may not be central to my thesis. The concluding section examines strategies libraries and their parent institutions might adopt in order to better achieve their programmatic goals and objectives.

To begin, I will review some of what we know about libraries and learning, the use of library resources, and special services to educationally disadvantaged students. A review of the literature gives one the feeling of déja vu; there is much we have already accomplished, and there is always the fear that we will reinvent the wheel rather than building upon what we have already learned.

What We Know

In most instances we can predict with reasonable assurance what will be the outcome of almost any program we offer. Our libraries, whether in colleges, junior colleges, or universities are heavily used, but at the same time library resources and services are under-utilized. Very few students or even faculty are able to take full advantage of the richness of library collections. This paper does not address the promise of technology, either to control bibliographic information or to provide improved access to resources. Technology will provide important tools which we will use to achieve our purposes, but in the context of addressing specific educational deficiencies, I view

technology as a means to the end. It is the final outcome which this paper addresses.

Several seminal studies are still frequently cited. Unfortunately, their lessons and recommendations have gone largely unheeded. For the purposes of this paper it is only necessary to highlight a few of the more significant.

Harvey Branscomb's Teaching with Books is a logical starting point. It was Branscomb's work that gave a special emphasis to what became known as the library-college movement.[2] Louis Shores, the movement's chief guru, envisioned librarians as taking over some of the traditional faculty functions. This would be accomplished by creating an independent learning environment. Students would work at their own pace in the library, surrounded by the resources of the library with the expertise of librarians readily available. Obviously, such an environment would partially displace the traditional classroom experience.

The library-college movement continues to have its advocates, but it is safe to conclude that the movement has had a minimal impact on the education of students. This is not surprising since one could have predicted how classroom faculty, who have an enormous stake in the definition of classroom instructor's role, would react to the library-college philosophy. Whether intended or not, the movement posed a threat to the classroom teacher. Moreover, the adovcates of the library-college movement couldn't guarantee success of the independent study mode of learning.

Patricia Knapp, in my judgment, produced some of the most useful work concerning interactions between librarians and classroom instructors, using library resources to improve classroom teaching. Her work might be

categorized as bibliographic instruction, but it was also much more. Knapp identified numerous principles that are still relevant. In one study she concluded that even when special programs were offered, the library still served a minority of students. Her research clearly shows that use of the library by students is very dependent upon the classroom instructional methodologies employed by faculty.[3] Other writers have identified the same principal tendencies, but Knapp's work provides a model.

Later, Knapp undertook what became the highly publicized project The Monteith College Library Experiment. Monteith College was a special unit of Wayne State University, and the college offered an opportunity for Knapp and her colleagues to undertake a series of special programs. In reporting on her work, Knapp writes:

> The ultimate purpose of the Monteith library program was to stimulate and guide the students into developing sophisticated understanding of the library and increasing competence in its use. To achieve this end, it proposes to provide students with experiences that are functionally related to their course work. Planning such experiences will involve library and instructional coordination on an unprecedented scale. The specific objectives of the first phase of the program the pilot project, therefore, are (1) an appraisal of a structure established for the purpose of attaining this coordination, (2) an exploration of new methods of relating the library to the instructional program, and (3) a preliminary assessment of the effectiveness of these methods.[4]

Knapp intended her staff to work with faculty as they developed course assignments. There was hope that such collaboration would lead to more purposeful student use of library resources. This librarian/faculty interaction also made it possible to analyze and appraise the project's planning process.[5]

The Monteith project generated only mixed results. But any reader of Knapp's work should be able to gain a realistic understanding of librarian and faculty attitudes, which is important since the same attitudes are likely to be encountered as we initiate programs in the future. There is no need to relearn what was so clearly documented in the Monteith project 20 years ago.

Susan E. Edwards and her colleagues at the University of Colorado conducted a well publicized project designed to ". . . find, with the help of the subject department faculty, alternatives to the lecture-textbook system and to find ways of encouraging high quality library research--within the context of the subject matter courses." The project hoped ". . . to find new and better ways of integrating library instruction into the curriculum and to increase the number of students who will be exposed to systematic library instruction."[6] The Colorado project achieved a certain measure of success because, like Knapp, they identified several reasons why faculty didn't rely on library resources to buttress classroom presentations and assignments.

John Williamson reported on a project at Swarthmore College, the "Teaching Library." Unlike the library-college movement, Williamson noted that the Swarthmore program conceded to the faculty its traditional functions, but attempted to aid the faculty in fulfilling those functions more efficiently.[7] The program aimed to provide students with the bibliographic and library skills required for life-long independent work. The Swarthmore experience once again underscored the notion that faculty must recognize the integral role of library materials in courses of instruction. If one expects greater integration of the library with classroom functions, this basic recognition is essential.

One obstacle to achieving greater integration of library resources and classroom instruction, according to Williamson, is in part due to "faculty intransigence and partly an indication of the difficulty in working up assignments that serve the ends of a given course while at the same time fostering library skills."[8] Williamson argues that in the final analysis, with the exception of senior staff, librarians will not be accepted in faculty circles as equals unless they have achieved personal or scholarly attainments "despite their vocation."[9] The Swarthmore experience suggests there is an absence of natural affinity between faculty and librarians that is necessary for the success of joint programs.

Joan Bechtel, writes about possible contributions of the library-college idea, recognizing the importance of Patricia Knapp's work. Bechtel also emphasizes the need to acquire faculty support and to recognize that a library project is important to a particular course.[10] James Kennedy points to the importance of creating a receptive educational climate, and by this he means that students will not use the library unless faculty members consider use of the library as an important element in education.[11] Timing of library education programs is also important. Bechtel argues that a short explanation on library use during freshman orientation is useless. Students will forget whatever is presented in the way of library instruction unless it is presented at a time when they need it and must use it.[12]

In the works cited, several common themes keep surfacing, what faculty will and will not do, what conditions must be present in order to gain faculty participation, etc. Unless the campus environment has changed in recent years, we don't have to begin our planning by wondering "what does the user (faculty) want?" We already know about user needs. The research of the last

20 years tells us how best to organize a joint library/faculty program and what pitfalls and disappointments we can expect to encounter.

Educationally Disadvantaged Students

Educational aid to disadvantaged students continues to be a visible, though inadequately funded instrument of federal educational policy. I will not attempt to tear apart the factors that led universities to give greater attention to educationally disadvantaged students; but one result of federal intervention and student unrest was the establishment of open admissions policies at some universities. The unrest in the New York City area led officials of the City University of New York (CUNY) to adopt such a policy. Patricia Breivik has examined the effective use of CUNY libraries in providing support to students who frequently did not possess traditional levels of academic preparation.[13] The Breivik account offers many insights into the successes and failures an institution risks when it institutes a dramatic change. One really can't extrapolate how successful the CUNY libraries might have been because they were not well funded by the administration. Consequently, the libraries weren't able to assimilate students motivated by different social motivations and views of social behavior. Nonetheless, Breivik points out that:

> Educationally disadvantaged students, then--insofar as any group can be generalized--cannot be characterized by their ethnic or cultural background or by their level of intelligence or academic mastery. However, they are easily discouraged, are often impatient, and need basic support by way of financial aid, counseling, and--particularly in communications skills--remedial training. They are willing, if they can see a way, to fight to survive in the academic world, as in their home environment.[14]

Resnick and Kaplan point out that institutions that accept students who possess divergent qualifications and needs must be prepared to overhaul traditional educational theories geared toward adequately prepared students.[15] If one accepts the Resnick and Kaplan premise, it follows that the commitment to disadvantaged students must permeate the organization, reaching down from administrative mandates to include commitments of those who are on the firing line--the classroom instructor and the librarian.

Many institutions have established local programs to aid minorities. The literature suggests that results have been mixed. In the library world, we can point with pride to programs such as the UCLA library instruction program for educationally disadvantaged students. This program was developed by Miriam Dudley.[16] Her self-study approach to library use is frequently cited as an examplar of its type tool and has been adopted by other institutions. Most library efforts to serve disadvantaged students have originated in the library; not many library programs seem to have been closely coordinated with campus activities. The State University of New York at Plattsburgh is an exception. The Plattsburgh campus strategy involves a six-week preadmission program for incoming educationally disadvantaged students. Library staff teach a five-week course in basic library skills as an integral part of the campus program. Other topics of instruction include mathematics, writing, reading and communications. This program has been reported to be well supported by counselors, student tutors and lab group activities.[17]

Thomas W. Shaughnessy and Carol Truett in separate studies report more discouraging, yet possibly more typical results. Shaughnessy studied library services to educationally disadvantaged students among a small group of university libraries. Services to disadvantaged, he reported, was more

effective when a librarian was employed directly by the Educational Opportunity Program office (EOP); otherwise there was little informal communication between library and EOP staff.[18] There seemed to be some correlation between the degree of success achieved and the presence of a librarian in either the library or the EOP office. Shaughnessy reports the customary dilemma of numbers: too many students and too few faculty and librarians to provide the badly needed special attention. Not surprisingly success was related to the ethnic identity of the person providing service to disadvantaged students. Shaughnessy found that those interviewed expressed concern that "while they were able to relate effectively to students who were of the same ethnic or racial background as themselves, they questioned their effectiveness in reaching students of other racial or ethnic backgrounds, especially those for whom English is a second language."[19] Carol Truett found that in a group of community colleges in Texas less than 20 percent of the schools surveyed provided a strong library services program in support of campus developmental education programs.[20]

In a way both Shaughnessy and Truett are looking at the same problem from different angles, each using different instrumentation. The common thread is that the libraries do not seem to be in the mainstream of institutional educational and service programs.

E. J. Josey, long associated with the cause of minority students, provided the outlines of a blueprint for action over a decade ago. Josey, in describing the efforts of City University of New York to make its open admissions policies a success by involving the libraries as integral support services, points out some of the potential activities that libraries could offer to aid developmental students. Josey numbered among his recommendations

services such as special library counseling, reading guidance, library use instruction, and special tutorial service in the library using honors students and other service-oriented volunteer groups to match the resources of the library with needs of disadvantaged students.[21] We know what needs to be done, what is lacking is the institutional commitment and a realistic level of resources.

Library Oriented Programs

Campus libraries can take the initiative to sponsor programs designed to improve the understanding and use of information related tools, or they can co-sponsor activities with colleges of education, extension agencies or local public library facilities. My suggestions are intended to illustrate ways in which libraries can work actively to improve the education of secondary and post-secondary students and faculty. I'm sure readers can suggest other, and more creative ideas.

Bibliographic Instruction

Expansion and enrichment of existing bibliographic instruction programs is an obvious candidate. Such programs may be designed to help students become more proficient in using the library and more importantly, to help them gain proficiency in use of discipline-oriented literature. Library instruction programs can be pegged to assist students in college-bound schools, already in college, undergraduates enrolled in teacher training programs, instructors in secondary schools and/or schools of education, and students and teachers enrolled in extension courses. Whatever is the target

group, it is important to keep firmly in mind that the principles identified by Knapp, Bechtel and others pertain; thus, the programs must be designed to involve the affected faculty and linked closely with existing academic courses so that students can relate bibliographic instruction to their existing academic programs.

Training the Trainers

Librarians can play a more active role in providing instruction to students who are actively working to earn teaching degrees. Courses could be organized jointly under the aegis of the library and the College of Education. The purpose would be to offer future teachers a foundation of knowledge and an appreciation of libraries and information resources that is currently lacking. Also, interaction through extension programs could be given to teachers already in the field. Similar courses could be offered to practicing teachers as part of individual professional development programs.

Information Services

Academic libraries house a rich reservoir of information materials supporting research and new developments in education and related disciplines. The literature of education is well controlled and can be accessed through the ERIC data base. Libraries can play a more direct role supporting the work of individuals, research teams, or administrators either on campus or in local communities by providing services for selected dissemination of information (SDI).

Extension Services

Few academic libraries place much emphasis on serving groups not connected with their parent institution. There are undoubtedly notable exceptions but rarely do "extension services" fit into the high priority category of services. The summer program reported by Richard Wood of Slippery Rock State Teachers College and the program at the Plattsburgh State College are among the exceptions.[22]

Closer cooperation between campus secondary school libraries in the same geographic area could build bridges that are currently lacking. A project directed by Joyce Merriam at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst investigated what a group of high schools in the surrounding area were doing to prepare students to use libraries.[23] It was Merriam's thesis that library instruction could be tailored and the processes made more personal if contacts with high schools and students could be established. The author collected documents from thirty high schools in the Massachusetts area that had been prepared by school librarians as material for local library and bibliographic instruction programs. These documents included items such as pre-test exercise sheets, information sheets on the use of basic library tools such as the card catalog and other basic reference tools, library handbooks, outlines for student aid programs, handouts outlining suggested search strategies, etc. Merriam then contacted the students once they arrived at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst campus. She reasoned by knowing something about the library instruction the students had received in high school, she would be better able to provide specially tailored programs of student instruction. If academic libraries are to play a more central role in preparing students to

access and use information resources, extension activities along the lines of Merriam's experiment should assume greater importance.

There should be a logical progression in the teaching of library strategies beginning with primary schools and continuing steadily through college. High school and college librarians should develop a learning sequence so that high school students can receive credit for learning in library instruction as they receive credit for mathematics and English. How many times must students be introduced to the card catalog or to Readers' Guide? Concepts and techniques learned in high school need not and should not be repeated.

Services to Educationally Disadvantaged Students

The mediocrity referred to by the At Risk authors refers to the bulk of our school age population, but there is a special need to aid those groups that are frequently categorized as educationally disadvantaged. There will continue to be an urgent need to offer remedial and enrichment programs to students who wish to attend college but for one reason or another are inadequately prepared for academic level coursework. Specially designed programs can be a great aid. The success of some programs is reported in a study authored by Chen-Lin Kulik, James Kulik, and Barbara Shwalb using a meta-analysis.[24]

Reducing the high dropout rate of minority students is a special concern of many universities. In a very practical sense, my own institution, the University of Michigan is very concerned about higher dropout rates associated with minority students. What we need are programs to help minority students assimilate into academic environments and provide them with the basic skills

needed. One strategy is to link together the talents of librarians, counselors and reading instructors using the library environment as the program's focal point. This is exactly what has been proposed by the Undergraduate Library and the Center for Reading and Study Skills at Michigan. The program, called INFO-SKILLS, has as its objective to provide remedial instruction and the social support systems that disadvantaged students require to help them cross the bridge from secondary to collegiate level instruction.

Barriers to be Surmounted

There are undoubtedly other, perhaps more creative ways to involve libraries in efforts to improve educational performance, and to deal with a number of economic barriers that block our road to progress. Instilling a higher level of "information competence" in students and teachers will require a recognition of the librarian's role that heretofore has been absent. If Knapp and others are correct, librarians still face an up-hill battle before we will be viewed as full partners in the educational enterprise. The issue is not just a matter of status, it is also a matter of turf and roles. Like the library-college movement, efforts to expand library involvement in campus programs is likely to be viewed by some as encroachment on their turf. Anyone who has organized a multi-unit program for instructing disadvantaged students probably understands just how sensitive this can become. Campus administrations may have to lead in finding ways to navigate the treacherous mine field of academic turf-doms.

The present social environment will also obstruct progress. The tax base of many urban and rural districts has been badly eroded in recent years. Money to support expanded programs will be scarce. Within individual

institutional environments many schools and colleges must resolve the obstacles presented by union contracts and government regulations and policies. These bureaucratic constraints will inhibit freedom of action, innovation, and instructional diversity. If significant progress is to be made, exceptions (or if necessary concessions) to existing organization policies and contracts must be not only accepted, but promoted.

One must not overlook the inevitable organizational resistance to change which is simply institutional inertia. Schools and colleges have not been notably receptive to external pressures. Even the student protests of the last decade achieved only a small measure of the institutional and educational reforms the students sought. Academic institutions prove to be remarkably resistant to these outside pressures. Consequently, incentives that energize the faculty must be found. (The issue of incentives is dealt with later.) Educators and college officials must be convinced to create special programs for educationally disadvantaged students; this will require new or expanded programs to improve student skills in reading, study, information gathering, and writing skills. To achieve these goals, no amount of rhetoric will substitute for large and sustained infusions of funds.

Before leaving the subject of barriers, I want to underscore what I sense to be a deep frustration felt by librarians whose specialties are library and/or bibliographic instruction. It is easy to talk about the need for librarians to become more proactive, but most libraries are inadequately prepared to assume a more active stance. Most struggle to maintain current levels of activity; the capacity for expansion is not available. Few libraries could sustain expanded bibliographic instruction programs. The financial stringencies of recent years have forced libraries to cut what fat might have previously existed. If libraries are to plan an active role, additional dollar resources must be forthcoming.

Implementation Issues

Our society often attacks problems with a naivete that is almost frightening. We seem to assume throwing money at problems guarantees solutions; we become impatient if solutions don't materialize quickly. Unlike Europeans we seem to have no sense of history. We build superhighways and allow state roads to disintegrate; construct suburban shopping malls and allow beautiful inner-city buildings to deteriorate. Eventually we will have to rebuild our inner-cities and resurface our nation's transportation system unless we are prepared to abandon them. Their reconstruction will be costly.

Now, as society teeters on the brink of reestablishing education as a national priority, let us not begin by attempting to replace the existing infrastructure. Rather we must build on our existing knowledge and expertise. I hope we adopt a "building block" strategy promoting the rebuilding of our secondary schools and the establishment of closer linkages between secondary schools and post-secondary institutions. I'm not referring to a bricks and mortar rebuilding but in a rethinking of rules and policies which govern schools and the roles of teachers. We have already begun to rethink issues such as classroom behavior, homework, student discipline, merit pay, teacher involvement in course planning, etc.

High school, collegiate, and school librarians should begin to work more closely together. Such collaboration might have enhanced numerous projects already reported in the literature. For example, Mae Frances Moore and Helen Yee reported on a program conducted at an Oakland, California community college with a special institutional emphasis on vocational education.[25] The library program was designed specifically to help students who were

educationally disadvantaged and for whom English was a second language. Such a program would have been strengthened had the authors been able to relate formally their library oriented program to those in the area of secondary school library programs. Similarly, the Merriam project cited earlier might have been enhanced had formal institutional agreements between the University and a group of area high schools existed. There is no reason to believe that academic and high school librarians wouldn't work together if such programs had the imprimatur of their institutions, and if the institutional and professional reward systems were structured to recognize such collaborations.

Campuses would be wise to review existing programs and capacities: what is going on already, how much money is being spent, and how much overlap exists? What strategies can be used to avoid duplication and avoid inter-unit competition? An inventory of existing capacities might be complemented by new commitments to redirect campus resources and to seek additional resources from funding agencies. An extract from one institution's budget request to the state illustrates a number of relevant concerns:

> . . . we are making one specific request that is aimed at enabling the University . . . to help with a major state and national problem. Namely, we propose to build an expanded program of University interaction with secondary school teachers in the state. To do this we propose to create a Center for Basic Education Enrichments. Like the outreach program, organized as part of the English Composition Board in the late seventies, the proposed center would support a selected number of university faculty (10 to 15 fte) in offering organized workshops and conferences specifically designed to support classroom teachers and their efforts to enhance the quality of the learning experience. The Center would focus on a limited number of basic disciplines, particularly mathematics, science and humanities with the objective of maintaining an ongoing partnership between university . . . faculty and their colleagues in the K-12 system.

The request reflects a renewed sense of priority, but it also underscores the lack of awareness about libraries. There is no mention of information

resources or library involvement and/or of the importance of basic skills lacking in so many students. Moveover, there appears to be scant acknowledgement of existing programs in the University's College of Education. It is both an example of renewed interest and the tendency to graft new programs onto those that already exist. This request might have been more convincing had evidence of the aforementioned "building block" approach been adopted.

Incentives

The issue of incentives is one of the thorniest that must be faced by anyone who desires to reshape academic priorities. At many universities, teaching itself (let alone remedial teaching), is not considered important in tenure or salary deliberations. Untenured instructors quickly recognize that innovative teaching is not rewarded unless the teaching is accompanied by evidence of original research sholarship. While some academics are willing to focus their energies to right a social wrong no matter what the personal consequences, most of us set our priorities to produce the greatest payoff. Isn't it time we faced the issue head-on? If we want faculty to engage in remedial teaching, then their academic advancement must be enhanced or at least not placed in jeopardy, by such involvement. State agencies, academic officers, and tenure and promotion committees must be willing to alter academic reward systems. Without an appropriate match between institutional and instructor expectations, programs to enhance teaching and learning will remain at the margin of academic attention.

Marketing and Public Relations

We in academe frequently seem to avoid the appearance of marketing ourselves and our services. There is a stigma attached to the "Madison Avenue" approach to promotion. Paradoxically, we forget that the principles of innovation, identified long ago by researchers such as Rogers, pertain to the academic community as well as to other professions and businesses.[26] If we are not willing to market and promote ourselves and our services, we can be assured that they will not become known, accepted or adopted by those we wish to reach. The American Library Association provides a model of what a professional association can accomplish. The current "Read More About it" campaign is but one example of how libraries can be brought to the attention of the public.

Higher education associations and agencies such as the American Association of Universities, the Association of Land Grant Schools, ACLS and the NEA could be helped if they adopted more aggressive stances on the the concept of lifelong learning and the importance of institutional support. These organizations could help convince not only the memberships they serve (i.e., individual college and universities, teachers and instructors), but they could also transmit our message to government agencies.

Translating What we Know into a Program of Action

Numerous distinguished commissions and committees appointed by foundations have identified the problems, established agendas, and issued calls for action. Fortunately there is much already that we know related to improving learning among primary, secondary, and college students. Currently we are still assessing the situation. It has been painful for some to

acknowledge the existence of this serious problem. What is needed now is to convert the growing national consensus into an action program.

Our nation can afford the cost, that issue is beyond any question. It is a matter of reordering priorities. One only has to watch the evening news or read the daily newspapers to realize the funds necessary to underwrite a national commitment toward education exist. More than a generation was required for the erosion of our education establishment to become painfully apparent, and it will take more than a generation of sustained effort utilizing the best technology society can provide and adequate funding to restore education to its former status and to instill into our society an appreciation of the importance of life-long reading and learning in this, the post-industrial age.

Footnotes

[1]Theodore Gross, "Reviewing the Reports: Finding a Blueprint for Quality Education," Change (November/December 1983): 34.

[2]Harvie Branscomb, Teaching with Books, Chicago: Association of American Colleges, 1940.

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