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SURVEYS OF COLLEGE READING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS--1929-1966.

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DESCRIPTORS- \*READING PROGRAMS, \*PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION, \*COLLEGE, STUDY SKILLS, READING COMPREHENSION, SPEED READING, QUESTIONNAIRES, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, PUBLICATIONS, READING TESTS, MECHANICAL TEACHING AIDS, COUNSELING, IOWA SILENT READING TESTS, EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL LABORATORIES, READING TEACHER, NATIONAL READING CONFERENCE, COLLEGE READING ASSOCIATION,

THIS PAPER PRESENTS FINDINGS BASED UPON APPROXIMATELY 50 PUBLISHED SURVEYS OF COLLEGE READING PROGRAMS SINCE 1921. PROGRAMS VARIED FROM INDIVIDUAL, INCIDENTAL HELP TO COMPREHENSIVE COURSES IN READING IMPROVEMENT. NO SET PATTERNS ARE NOTED FOR LENGTH OF TRAINING, COST, OR AMOUNT OF CREDIT GIVEN. PROGRAMS PRIOR TO 1940 STRESSED STUDY HABITS, COMPREHENSION, AND SPEED OF READING. ACADEMIC CREDIT INCREASED, AND ADMINISTRATION AND ENGLISH JOINED PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION IN SPONSORING PROGRAMS BETWEEN 1940 AND 1960. APPROXIMATELY 258 PROGRAMS IN SOME 490 SCHOOLS ARE REPORTED. SINCE 1950, NUMEROUS WORKBOOKS, PACERS, TACHISTOSCOPES, AND READING FILMS WERE USED IN A VARIETY OF PROGRAMS. SPEED READING BECAME A TOPIC OF INTEREST. THE ROLE OF THE COUNSELING CENTER BECAME PROMINENT IN THE ORGANIZATION OF PROGRAMS. GROWTH IN TRAINING MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, AND TESTS PARALLELED THE GROWTH OF INSTITUTIONS AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF READING PROGRAMS. A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF 49 ITEMS IS INCLUDED.  
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SURVEYS OF COLLEGE READING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS: 1929-1966

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The purpose of this brief paper is to relate some findings based on the reading of forty nine surveys related to college reading improvement programs. These findings should be interpreted cautiously as evidently there have been no surveys made of all institutions of higher learning either before or after Triggs' survey (44) in 1942 unless Leverett's survey (27) included college and university students under an "adult" rubric. Thus, at this time, it is not known just exactly how many programs do exist in the almost two-thousand-two hundred institutions of higher learning in the United States. However, since so many surveys of different types have been made, one can see certain trends and note certain developments. (Note on Participant questionnaire)

1929-1939

The earliest survey seems to have been made by Parr (34) in the spring of 1929, when he mailed a questionnaire to every state university in the country. Forty questionnaires were returned with nine programs being reported all of which were operated by Education Departments. However, a review of the literature up to 1929, shows that at least twenty-four programs had been reported separately up to that time, the earliest being reported in 1915. Thus, it seems safe to say that some colleges were helping their students, however informally, to read better and faster since before the turn of the century. A rather complete and excellent history of the college reading program movement has been written by Leedy (26). (To gain a clear picture of the early days of college reading programs, one should read both the surveys, the separate reports of programs and Leedy's study.)

The next survey published after Parr's was evidently that of Strang's (38). In this survey, 158 colleges were contacted with 82 reporting programs. The results of her study showed that sixteen colleges were using The Iowa Silent Reading Test and the rest of the programs were using a total of fourteen different reading tests. The programs varied from individual, incidental help to comprehensive courses in reading improvement. There were no set patterns in price, length, credit or other facets of the programs. (It was interesting to note that the questions asked by Strang's respondents greatly paralleled those asked of the writer by his respondents although there was a difference of twenty-four years between the studies.)

In 1938, Traxler (43) reported that out of 656 liberal arts colleges surveyed, 76 reported remedial reading programs. Witty (46) and Kopel and Geerdes (25) reported surveys made in the late 30's. Witty reported 41 programs and Kopel and Geerdes found 12 schools offering assistance to college students.

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During this early period, Education and Psychology Departments sponsored most of the reported programs. The programs stressed study habits, comprehension, and speed of reading. The cost of the program to the students was quite low and in most cases the program was offered free of charge. Academic credit was given for a small minority of the programs. No great agreement was found as to number of sessions, materials used or length of programs. The tachistoscope was used frequently being one of the few "machines" available during this period. The pacer came out in 1930 and as the number of such machines on the market increased, so did the use of them in programs.

#### 1940-1949

There were about eight surveys published during this period. Triggs (44) reported finding 185 programs, Charters (12) reported on 106 programs, McCaul (30) discussed eighteen programs. Traxler (42) mentioned three programs, Walker (45) found twenty-six Negro college programs, Lindquist (28) reported on 165 programs, and an AACTE report (39) discussed some programs. McCaul was mainly interested in the cost of college reading programs. He found that the charge, when made, was small. Lindquist contacted 634 colleges and Triggs sent questionnaires to 1,528 schools. Triggs felt that about 258 programs would be operating in the fall of 1942. She had received replies from 490 institutions. Education, Psychology, and Administration sponsored most of the programs with English sponsoring about a third.

During this decade English Departments and Administration rose in number as sponsors of programs. Academic credit seemed to be given in more programs than before. As would be expected, programs were quite varied in length, use of materials, and machines, etc. During this period reading films and more pacers became available and these were used in more programs than before.

#### 1950-1959

This decade was most productive with at least nineteen surveys being published. It was also when the first state studies appeared. (Also during this time, on April 25, 1952, the first meeting of the National Reading Conference was held. The College Reading Association held its first meeting on October 11, 1958. In the summer of 1953, the International Reading Association had its beginning and was formally created in 1955 and duly announced in the February 1956 Reading Teacher. Over thirty Doctoral dissertations were made in the area of college reading during this period alone as opposed to at least that same number for the period 1926-1949. Special Directories of college reading clinics began to be published. It seems reasonable to conclude that during the period 1950-59, college reading came into its own as a permanent fixture in our lives as did

all phases of reading.) The late Oscar S. Causey, the founder of the National Reading Conference, made a number of surveys from 1952 to 1955. The largest number of programs reported was in 1955 by Causey (10). He found 418 programs, the largest number ever reported to that or this date. A few of Causey's findings were as follows:

Control of Program: English, 126; Education, 122; Psychology, 48; Other or Not Reported, 101.

Credit: 142 schools awarded from one to five hours credit; No credit 132 schools; Not reported 144 schools.

Length of Course: About 8 weeks, 16 schools; 18 weeks, 70 schools; 10 weeks, 29 schools; 9 weeks, 10 schools; less than 9 weeks, 54 schools; Not Reported, 73 schools.

Number of Class Meetings a Week: 1 meeting, 45 schools; 2 meetings, 136 schools; 3 meetings, 109 schools; 4 meetings, 21 schools; 5 meetings, 10 schools; Not Reported 48 schools.

Use of Materials: Twenty-five different workbooks were used in the various programs. Three hundred and ninety-one schools reported using pacers, tachistoscopes, and reading films.

Numerous states were surveyed separately during this period. Colvin (13) reported on forty-three programs in Pennsylvania for the school year 1957-58, Kingston (23) discussed eleven Texas programs for the year 1953, Miklas (31) found twenty-three programs in California in 1952, and the Woods (47) study reviewed twenty-six Wisconsin programs for 1955. The state surveys seemed to be a more accurate accounting of the existing programs as compared to national surveys using sampling techniques.

To this writer's knowledge, no study has been published since Causey's 1954 survey which listed a higher number of programs. The study, therefore remains as the most recent inclusive study yet published. This survey, along with all the other surveys made during this decade clearly shows the variety of programs in existence and the evident method on the part of many persons to locate and describe college programs. The first directories of reading clinics were published during this period (1, 5) and newspapers, magazines, and journals contained reports of high reading rates which some surveys reflected regarding the main reason students desired to take reading programs. Reading rate became a topic of student conversation on many campuses and one's rate was often a status symbol, if high enough.

#### 1960-1966

At least fourteen surveys have been reported since 1960 as of the writing of this paper. New directories appeared (15, 16, 17, 19) and some new surveys are currently being made\* A national survey

\*Florida institutions of higher learning; the participants of this meeting; private organizations operating programs for colleges; and programs especially designed for law school students

was reported (37) medical school programs were surveyed (18), two state level surveys were made (29,40), administrative and professorial thoughts on programs were surveyed (3,21), the counseling relationship and reading was discussed (24), reading and study skills programs (22), and communications arts (49) programs were reported.

The surveys of most import seem to be those of Shaw (37), Auckerman (3), and C. Ketcham (21). Shaw made his survey in the fall of 1960. He contacted 505 schools, received 350 replies of which 242 schools reported programs. The total number of colleges contacted by Shaw represented about 25 per cent of the schools in existence at that time. Shaw received about a seventy per cent rate of return and about seventy per cent of the respondents reported programs. The rise of English Departments and Administration sponsorship of programs along with Guidance Center sponsorship was noted but Education and Psychology departments sponsored half the programs reported. Shaw seemed to feel that programs were on the wane and/or people were not too prone to return questionnaires. Causey (10), Triggs (44), and Leverett (27) evidently did receive a low rate of return and as best can be determined, no follow-up techniques were used to enhance the rate of return. But it should be remembered that these surveyors contacted over a thousand schools in each survey. In a single state study (29), made in 1961, all the institutions of higher learning were finally contacted. This involved mailed questionnaires, two sets of follow-up letters, phoned queries, and personal visits to obtain a one-hundred percent response to the question: "Does your school offer a reading improvement program to its students?". (One school returned two questionnaires-one said "Yes" the other "No". One emphatic No! was given over the phone. One begrudging "Yes" was given after assurances were given regarding complete anonymity of response.)

As mentioned earlier, other surveys made in this period highlighted the role of the counseling center in relation to reading programs (24), noted the opinions of "academic faculty" administrators regarding college programs (3,21), described programs offered in medical schools (18), related the usefulness of reading skill improvement and study skills being taught together (22), and described the number and content of the college programs of three states (29,40).

The directories of Educational Developmental Laboratories (15,16,17) and Foster (1,9,3) appeared during this decade. These directories show a considerable number of private reading centers now in operation. The surveys of C. Ketcham (21) and Auckerman (3) seemed to be rather unique. Ketcham asked some college professors in selected Pennsylvanian colleges and universities to comment on reading programs. The seventy-two respondents alleged that such courses belonged in college and most (94%) felt the students were

helped. Auckerman sent an "opinionaire" to the presidents of 300 state colleges and universities. He received over 200 replies of which 138 presidents reported that their schools had established programs and whose comments were used in the report which included all the 48 mainland states. Comments from schools having new programs or planning programs were not given. Most of the presidents felt that the reading program was: necessary, worth the cost, beneficial to the students, in need of expansion, better financed out of general funds so students would not be expected to pay for it, supported by the faculty, and worth defending to a Board of Trustees. These two surveys give welcome data to further prove the existence and support of college programs. No doubt this decade will prove to be the most productive of all in number of studies made in college reading. A national survey of the over 2,200 institutions of higher learning is being planned and should be completed in a year or so.

#### SUMMARY

This paper has presented some findings based on the reading of nearly fifty published surveys of college reading programs and related phenomena. Since 1929, when the first survey was evidently made, college reading programs have seemingly grown in number and size. This growth seems to parallel the size in the number of institutions, the growth of interest in college reading, the development of professional organizations, the expanding acceptance of programs, and the increasingly larger amounts of reading required of college students. The rise in available materials, equipment\*, and tests for college reading programs has been equal to the need, if not more so. Administration and faculty support has been evident and positive.

Public, private, junior all-male, all female, Negro, sectarian, and professional schools have been surveyed either separately or as part of a sampling. Single state surveys seemed to be the most productive. No national survey of all schools has evidently been published since Triggs (44) study. Education and Psychology Departments were the pioneers in starting college reading improvement programs with English Departments and Administrative Offices joining in the movement with equal vigor.

It is evident from a review of these surveys and separate reports of programs that college reading improvement programs have existed since before 1900. This was far ahead of: the invention of the pacer in 1930: the development of the reading film in 1940: the manufacture of the controlled reader in 1938: the publication of a

\*But that they might not actually defend it in a "showdown" situation

national journal devoted exclusively to reading in 1948: and the founding of an organization for college reading in 1952.

Perhaps a well developed survey of the schools which never have had nor do not ever wish to have reading programs, and surveys of schools which discontinued programs might reveal some pertinent information. However, no severe decrease in programs seems to be in sight for the near future. In fact, data being collected now shows many colleges offering two types of programs often sponsored by different divisions or departments. It would seem that reading programs have now reached the status-level of death and taxes.

\*Nearly 60 workbooks and about 40 machines

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