

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 029 623

JC 690 144

By-Wilson, R.E.

The Librarian as a Media Strategist.

Pub Date [69]

Note-4p.; Paper delivered at the Annual Conference of Junior College Libraries (4th, Southern Illinois University, March 29, 1969).

EDRS Price MF-\$0.25 HC-\$0.30

Descriptors- \*Instructional Materials Centers. \*Junior Colleges. \*Libraries. \*Media Specialists

This paper describes the librarian as a media strategist rather than as a learning strategist only to distinguish him from the faculty member who conscientiously tries to develop effective student learning. Since the junior college usually offers a variety of occupational programs, transfer programs, developmental programs, and courses for specific community needs, and since it is devoted to student learning rather than to research and publication, the library must be prepared to support all the learning styles and techniques. It must supply not only books, but also other media of study available in the community and the materials the rest of the college staff requires to provide the feedback necessary for student motivation and success. It must supplement in every way the teacher and classroom environment. The librarian must begin to apply the modern concept of "cost effectiveness" to determine what learning for which students can be best facilitated by a specific medium. A comparison of media will show which one produces the most learning per dollar. (HH)

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE  
PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS  
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION  
POSITION OR POLICY.

By R. E. Wilson

The title of this presentation, "The Librarian as a Media Strategist," can be interpreted several ways. My first inclination was to substitute the word learning for media. After all, a community college is concerned with learning and it seemed reasonable to portray the librarian as a learning strategist. But, this is the essence of a community college. And, if we place this ultimate responsibility on the shoulders of the librarian, we will have made the librarian the center of the institution. Many of you may agree with this analysis and more than one college administrator has supported this view.

Nevertheless, regardless of our feelings about the righteousness of this view, there are other people within a college that have a legitimate claim to the title of learning strategist. For example, conscientious faculty members who make every attempt to understand their students and to develop effective instructional programs have a strong claim to the title. By using the qualifier "conscientious," I have in mind those individuals who evaluate themselves and rate their efforts in terms of how well their students learn. If all faculty members possessed the values and beliefs that emphasize the significance of student learning and the importance of their role in facilitating learning, wide spread student crises on college campuses would probably disappear. That, of course, is pure conjecture and it may never be possible to fully test the idea.

If the librarian is a media strategist in a community college and not a learning strategist, how does this translate into action? My answer is based on several assumptions and beliefs about community colleges, the phenomenon of learning, and the significance of media. First, community colleges are created by local groups or subcultures to facilitate or produce learning. At first most two year colleges were privately supported and responsive to certain religious and social groups. The students of those private institutions, although drawn from broad geographic areas, were much alike because of common social, economic and religious backgrounds. During the last ten years we have witnessed a major change in the two year college field. Approximately fifty community colleges have been established every year since 1963. With few exceptions, the new community colleges are publicly supported and responsive to the demands of their geographic communities. Regardless of geographic homogeneity, student bodies of community colleges are increasingly representative of their communities and consequently heterogeneous. The multiplicity of student differences and the significance of these differences among community college students have provided educational challenges never previously encountered. So long as college students were alike in most respects, the identical instructional treatments for students was fairly productive. At least this was the common contention. Even if this claim was valid, it no longer seems reasonable.

Community colleges must be recognized as unique institutions. Unlike secondary schools, that generally provide a limited number of educational tracks or programs, community colleges are expected to be comprehensive and provide a wide variety of instructional programs. Comprehensive community colleges usually include numerous occupational programs, several transfer programs, a developmental program, and courses to meet the specific needs of specific groups in the community. Unlike the older and better known four year colleges and universities, community colleges have a clearly stated mission to facilitate student learning. (It is not enough to offer courses and cover material in classes and dismiss student failures as their failures. We have an obligation to provide successful learning experiences.) Community colleges were not established as communities of scholars with mandates to spend a major portion of their

\* Paper delivered at the Fourth Annual Conference, Junior College Libraries on March 29, 1969 at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

time conducting research and preparing publications to expand the fund of knowledge. Without question, the continuing use of other institutions of higher education as models for comprehensive community colleges is the surest way of destroying the character of comprehensive community colleges. In a short time, if we are not careful, community colleges can become only pale imitations of four year colleges. Imitations staffed with humiliated faculties. Imitations located in, but not really a part of, frustrated communities.

If we accept student learning as the mission of community colleges, we must identify and recognize some significant assumptions about the process of learning, the intended learners, and learning objectives. For learning to occur, motivation, learner activity, and feedback are necessary. Learning can only occur when people are motivated, when people are sufficiently interested to become actively involved. Knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and values cannot be poured into people as water is poured into containers. Covering the material in the classroom is no assurance that learning occurs. Some of you may recall the experiments to produce learning while the subjects of the experiments slept. The idea was to play and re-play certain recordings while the students slept. Some people actually expected that the students would learn effortlessly while sleeping. To use the vernacular of Laugh-In, very interesting - but stupid. The third necessary factor is feedback. Feedback is the process whereby the learner becomes aware of his progress or lack of progress. At times everyone needs to know how well he or she is doing. In the beginning, when confidence is lacking, frequent feedback is needed. As people progress and compile successful records through a sequence of assignments, the need for feedback is diminished. A mid-term and final examination are sufficient and, as graduate students, people function effectively with even less feedback. (Although the large number of graduate students who never complete their degrees suggests otherwise.) Of course, community college students are not graduate students. On the contrary, many of them have experienced failure and frustration in educational institutions. These people need frequent feedback for learning to occur.

Several assumptions about learners also need to be specified. The phrase "individual differences" may be trite, but it is nevertheless a real factor to be considered when planning for community college students. Individual differences include three general categories. The most apparent, and the most amenable to measurement, are differences of knowledge and skills. These are the cognitive areas of learning and all of us recognize that each student has a unique configuration of knowledge and skills. A more difficult area to measure, but perhaps more significant because of its influence on motivation, is the affective domain. Each student has a unique set of attitudes, beliefs and values. It is this set of affective factors that determines what learning objectives and techniques will appeal to a student. The third area of individual differences is often called "learning style." Students have different ways of learning. Some can easily learn from the printed page whereas others need to handle and manipulate three dimensional objects to comprehend an assignment. Some students need rigid scheduling and frequent feedback while others can learn independently. Regardless of the explanation for different learning styles, comprehensive community colleges cannot effectively facilitate the learning of all students until they provide alternative combinations of media and methods. As long as we routinely make the same assignments and impose the same techniques on all students, we will continue to assure the failure of a large number of students.

Finally, we must be concerned about learning objectives. What the students are expected to learn has a significant influence on media. The media assignments need to approximate the desired learning as nearly as possible. If the learning objective requires that students know how to operate a certain type of machine, or solve a certain

type of problem, or treat a certain type of injury, effective assignments will require students to actually operate that type of machine, solve that type of problem and treat that type of injury. Since many of the media needed for realistic and effective assignments are not available on the campus but are available in the community, the entire community must in fact become a community college's laboratory - its media collection - its learning resources center. Cooperative education programs that utilize community resources and real work experiences to provide a meaningful, interrelated combination of theory and practice are excellent examples of what can and should be done. It is surprising and distressing to note how few community colleges utilize this instructional technique. At this time, in fact, more four year colleges and universities have cooperative education programs than community colleges.

Where does this lengthy discussion about learning lead us? What is its significance to librarians as media strategists? The answers are really obvious and the trend is already apparent. Librarians must get out of their book stacks, enlarge their perspectives, and focus on learning results. Books will always be significant media, but their significance or relative importance will decline. Librarians must be more concerned about identifying and cataloging other media available in the community; about identifying and producing media that is needed; about identifying and collecting data to evaluate the effectiveness of media for certain students; and above all, about providing alternative sets of media to achieve the same learning objectives. No longer can librarians evaluate their efforts by citing the number of volumes added and available on the shelves. The activities of librarians, along with other members of the staff, will increasingly be evaluated in terms of students' successes. The significant questions will be: How many students successfully completed their assignments, courses and programs? What percentage of the entering students succeeded in the college? How well are the graduates doing on the job or at a senior institution? How many of the students who enrolled in developmental courses subsequently enrolled and succeeded in advanced courses? Those are a few of the questions that will determine how well the members of the college staff, including librarians, are performing their functions.

As media strategists, librarians must begin to understand and apply the concepts of "cost benefit" and "cost effectiveness." What learning for what students can be facilitated by a specific medium - what is its cost benefit? Cost effectiveness requires comparing media having identical functions to ascertain which medium facilitates the most learning for the dollar. These concepts, along with other management tools for improving the effectiveness of librarians, such as differentiated staffs, must be understood and utilized by librarians.

Education is now the biggest business in this country. A larger portion of our gross national product goes into education every year. Unfortunately, little of this money goes into research and development. Most of the expenditures for education are salaries. This is slowly changing and the hope is to rely less on the traditional classroom teachers and more on other media - media that have been tested and proven valid and effective - including para-professionals and student tutors. This trend will probably become more pronounced, despite the numerous red herrings dragged into the discussions, such as the dehumanization of the educational process.

One effect of this trend of increasing reliance on media other than classroom teachers is to depend more on librarians and their staffs to select and make available a variety of media. In all likelihood media specialists - librarians if they are willing to learn and broaden their field of expertise - will have many more resources at their disposal. This trend away from primary reliance on one medium, the classroom teacher, is more than an attempt to save money. Individualization of instruction, the reasonable solution to individual differences, also requires less dependence on classroom environments

and teachers as dispensers of information. And so, the reasonable culmination of our efforts to improve the efficiency of community colleges is to place greater responsibility for the learning process into the hands of media strategists. Can librarians fulfill this greatly expanded role or must we train a new group of people? The answer depends on you and your colleagues.

Some of your fellow professionals at community colleges, such as Miami-Dade, St. Louis Junior College District, Oakland, and DuPage, have already shown they can fill these larger roles. Unfortunately, too many librarians - even some librarians of new community colleges - have difficulty looking beyond the stacks. Until they internalize the belief that a community college is not just another college and until they learn that books alone do not an education provide, serious problems will persist. Many librarians will grow but some continually will criticize, will become embittered, and will never effectively work with other members of their colleges. Conferences such as this can help. But for each of us to be more effective we must understand the unique missions of our colleges and the increasing importance of our roles in achieving these missions.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.  
LOS ANGELES

APR 19 1969

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR  
JUNIOR COLLEGE  
INFORMATION