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ABSTRACT

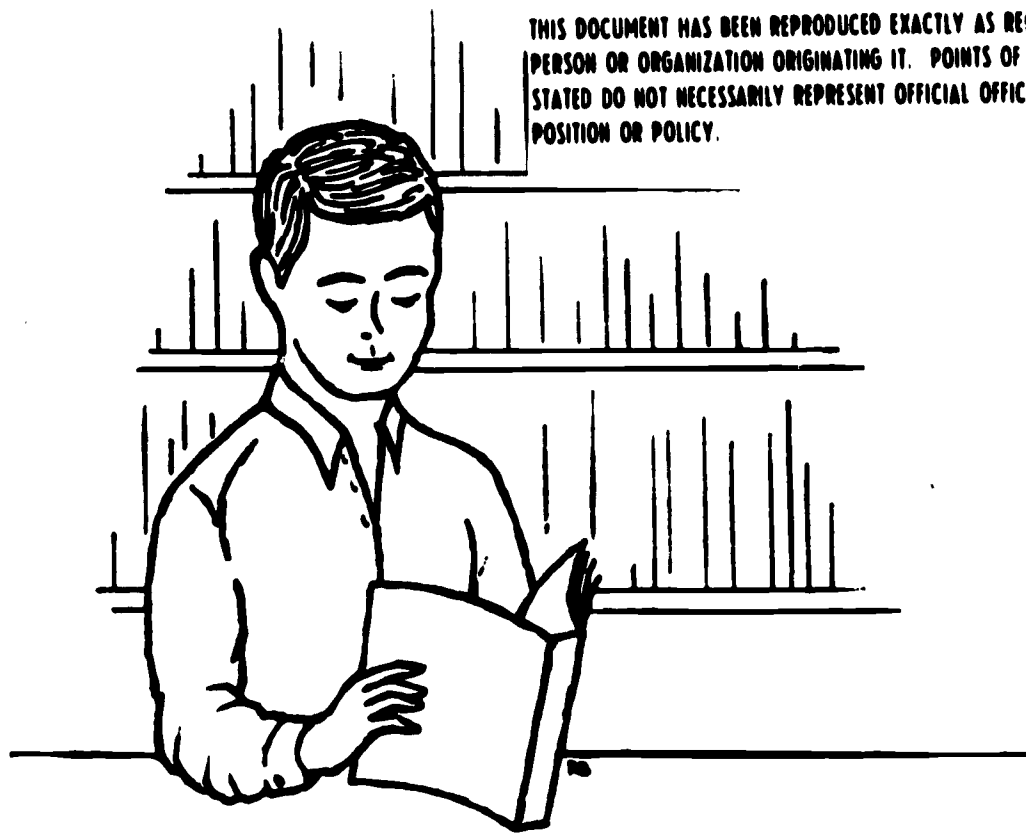
This report consists of recommendations for library facilities in either new or existing school buildings. Suggestions are made for the location and size of the library. Also included are considerations for library acoustics, heating and interior finish. It is considered to be of critical importance that adequate and separate space should be provided for reading, work, conference rooms, the librarian's office, and book stacks and storage. Some specific recommendations are made for elementary and junior high school libraries. A table of specifications is included. (GM)

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# planning the school library

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## INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet is one of a series to improve the planning of specific areas of the school plant. It is hoped that it will be helpful to both architects and local school officials in the preparation of plans for new buildings and to improve existing school libraries.

The manuscript for the pamphlet was prepared co-operatively by Ruth E. Babcock and Anna C. Kennedy, assistant and former assistant, school library service, of the Bureau of Secondary School Supervision and Basil L. Hick of the Division of School Buildings and Grounds.

DON L. ESSEX, *Director*  
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## PLANNING THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

It is generally understood that a library is an essential part of a secondary school, but there is not always general agreement as to the resources and space needed. Many people have not been aware of the need for a library in an elementary school, even though for many years elementary school libraries have been demonstrating their value to pupils and to the school program. To us the library is a necessary part of any school. Here is a source of material for research and reference. These materials could include not only books and other printed material but also maps, globes, slides, filmstrips, tapes, records, and teaching machines. This is where pupils can browse, learn to choose books from a fairly large collection, and acquire the habit of reading for recreation, as well as a place where they can supplement the learning which takes place in their various classes. A librarian is a friendly guide and helper who co-operates with pupils in their various activities.

This pamphlet assumes a broad program of library services and discusses the factors to assure a well-organized educational facility.

### Location

The library should be easily accessible to every member of the school. It should be near the departments that will use it most and relatively near to other study centers. It should be remote from centers of noisy activity such as gymnasiums, music rooms, delivery entrances, and cafeterias.

A library should be a well-proportioned room to provide for its proper function, to assure its full use, and to permit the supervision of its entire area. Its shape should be such that custom-built furnishings and equipment are not necessary. It is wise to plan space adjacent to the library so that as the school expands, this space can be used for library expansion. A library can be oriented in any direction. However, care should be taken so that overheating or a poor visual environment does not result because of its orientation.

In an elementary school, since all grades make use of the library, it should be located as close to the center of pupil population as possible.

**General considerations**

The library reading room, the adjoining workroom, and the conference area should be well lighted for comfortable seeing and reading. Refer to the *Regulations of the Commissioner of Education* dated revised December 1961, and *School Lighting Standards* for the Division of School Buildings and Grounds dated revised August 1961 for specific recommendations. Careful attention should be given to the amount of glass in the library. The library needs windows, but not an expanse of glass. Light provided should not result in a poor visual environment nor in an inefficient thermal environment.

The library suite should be treated acoustically. The walls and ceiling finishes should have high reflective values. Furniture should be selected to insure an overall pleasing visual environment as well as to assure desirable posture.

Sound-reducing floor covering is essential since freedom of movement and reasonable quiet are requisite to library work. The floor should be durable, easy to clean and repair, and in harmony with the remainder of the library. Hardwood is preferred for the interior finish in a library reading room. Care should be taken in selecting the final finish for the wood so that it can be matched easily in standard finishes for tables, chairs, charge desk, and other equipment. Custom finishes and custom-made equipment introduce a problem of matching that may prove very annoying when equipment is sought for replacement or later expansion of library facilities. Generally custom-made equipment is more costly. A dull, rubbed finish is desirable for both furniture and interior trim since it eliminates glare.

Particular attention should be given to the treatment of the elementary school library so that it will be appropriate for younger girls and boys. The finish of the room and of the shelving; the style, finish, and type of furniture; and the use of light, and sometimes bright colors, contributes to the interest of the elementary library room.

To facilitate the handling and circulation of books and other instructional materials originating from the library, it is imperative that the library reading room and workroom be on the same level as the corridor adjacent to it. The introduction of steps from the corridor into a library not only limits the function of a library but also presents a safety hazard to the students coming to the library for work.

Library doors, if single, should be 36 inches wide; if double, 30 to 36 inches wide.

The heating unit should be concealed. If heating units are to be placed under windows, the wall space on this side of the room may be used for adjustable shelving, 12 to 15 inches wide and 42 inches

high, which will (1) enclose the heating units (2) provide insulated storage space adjacent to each heating unit (3) provide additional shelving for books or periodicals and (4) supply a counter for exhibits, plants, or other objects of interest.

### **Space provisions**

The two library rooms needed in all schools, elementary and secondary, small and large, are the library reading room and the workroom. Larger schools and schools having special programs need and use additional rooms.

The reading room, the principal part of the library, is the place where the members of the school use books and other library materials. The reading room usually shelves a large part of the library's book collection. As an information center, it deals with questions which require the use of reference materials and problems for which there must be special library instruction. Through its appearance, its arrangement, its displays and exhibits, its signs and its tools, the reading room introduces pupils to books and stimulates both reading and reference. The school library reading room serves also as a circulation center, a center for the loan and return of books and other materials. These functions — as well as the enrollment for which the school building is planned, the size of the book collection recommended for the school, the library program suggested for the particular school level — must be considered in deciding on the size of the reading room. In general, the reading room must be a relatively large room, a center for readers, for reading, and for reference work.

For example, it is recommended that the reading room of an elementary school be adequate in size to seat both a regular size class and individual students from other classrooms who may be using the room at the same time and to shelve at least 4,000 books.

In a junior high school, it is well to plan a library classroom large enough to accommodate an entire class in addition to the regular reading room. The senior high school also needs a library classroom adjoining the library reading room.

The library workroom is essential as a place for doing the work necessary for organizing the library. It functions as a center for: receiving new books; checking them with orders and invoices; classifying books and preparing them for use; preparing the card catalogue and the other necessary library records; making signs, posters, and exhibits; mending; and preparing books for the bindery. It must have a table or counter work surfaces, equipment for typing and filing, shelving for books being processed, cupboard for library supplies, and the librarian's office desk and file.

In larger schools, additional space is needed not only for increased enrollment but also for additional purposes relating to the personnel and program of the school and its library. The additional rooms which serve important purposes and provide essential values are the conference room or rooms, a listening room, a viewing room, a stack room, and the librarian's office.

A workroom which is to serve also as a librarian's office must have additional space for the librarian's tools and records and for conference purposes. A workroom for small schools planned as a conference-workroom should have not only a greater amount of floor space but also provisions for separating the workroom area from the conference area.

### **Reading room**

In planning the space to be allotted for the reading room or reading rooms, 25 square feet of floor space should be allowed for each person to be seated and approximately 125 running feet of wall shelving for each thousand books to be shelved — this is on the basis of an average of eight books to a running foot.

The reading room should be appropriate for the particular school; attractive in outlook and proportions; simple, open, unobstructed in outline so as to be pleasant and easy to use and efficient to administer. In general, a wide rectangular room or a nearly square room is to be preferred to a long narrow room and is greatly to be preferred to a room that is circular or semicircular. A circular room is difficult from the standpoints of shelving the book collection, seating pupils, and supervision. A circular room is most difficult in that it requires shelving and furniture specifically designed and manufactured to conform to the lines of the room. This is not only expensive and difficult to match when the library must be enlarged or remodeled, but even more serious, such furniture has not proved comparable to the standard library furniture and equipment in appearance or usefulness for school library purposes. Narrow entrance passageways and half-hidden areas should be avoided.

It is recommended that reading rooms for elementary schools be planned to seat both the number enrolled in the average-size class and 8 to 10 pupils who are using the library as individuals. Approximately 770 square feet of floor space will usually be sufficient for this purpose. In elementary schools with larger enrollments, it will be desirable to increase the size of the reading room to assure adequate space to accommodate the larger enrollment and to house the recommended number of volumes.



When the elementary school library tends to become an instructional materials center, additional workroom space should be provided for housing, testing, and using records, tapes, filmstrips, films, and other audio-visual material.

In planning the amount of space to allow for reading rooms in the junior and senior high school, provision should be made to seat approximately 15 per cent of the enrollment in small schools, 10 per cent in medium sized schools, and approximately 8 per cent in large schools. The library reading room in a small school should seat at least 40. Two adjoining reading rooms are often preferred to a single reading room when the demand for seats exceeds 100. In fact, it is seldom, if ever, practical to provide a single secondary school reading room to seat more than 100. When adjoining rooms are planned, they should be separated by a wide door to facilitate both movement from one to the other and supervision. In some instances, the one room is used for general reading while the other is used for reference in particular subject fields such as social studies or English. It must be possible to have students move easily from one room to the other because they will need to make frequent use of the card catalogue and reference materials or materials in related subject fields.

#### **Library classroom**

In junior high schools, in junior-senior high schools, and in large high schools, it is desirable to have a second reading room which is flexible in its furniture and equipment so that it may be used sometimes as a general reading room and sometimes for classes scheduled either for library instruction or for supervised reference. In junior-senior high schools, this second reading room may be planned and designated as the junior high school reading room. This room should be planned to seat at least 30.

#### **Conference room**

Conference rooms enable a few pupils with, or without, an instructor to work together in using or discussing library materials without interfering with the quiet of the main reading room. Frequently conference rooms are used for committee work or special reports, for viewing filmstrips or listening to records, for special groups of readers — superior or slow. In larger schools, one conference room or rooms should adjoin the reading room. It is often desirable to separate conference rooms from the reading room by a half-glass partition over low shelving. Sometimes conference rooms may be separated from each other by a movable partition so that the entire area may be used for larger groups or a very small class.

A conference room to seat six or eight persons should have approximately 120 to 160 square feet of floor space. Shelving for all of the available wall space, as well as a table and chairs, is essential equipment. A bulletin board and a vertical file are also useful. In case a conference room is to be equipped for viewing and listening, provision should be made for a screen or white chalkboard, for outlets, and equipment for using records, tapes, or filmstrips.

#### **Librarian's office**

The librarian needs an office or office space for conferences with other members of the faculty, working with members of the library staff and the student staff, and for advising individual students on their reading, their reference questions, and their special reports, as well as for such responsibilities as book selection, business administration, and planning which require considered attention and care. In larger schools a separate office is a necessity. In smaller schools, some of the workroom space is often assigned to office activities, but not without loss in efficiency.

The equipment needed for the librarian's office consists of an office desk and chair, three or four additional chairs, shelving, a vertical file, a telephone. The space allowed should be at least 120 square feet.

#### **Stack and storage space**

Stacks or free-standing floor shelving, as well as additional wall shelving, are needed in larger schools for shelving books used at infrequent intervals, duplicate copies, rare or out-of-print books which need special care, and important books set aside for rebinding which are being held for limited use until the end of the school year.

Shelving or special filing space is needed for large pictures, posters, maps, globes, book ends, and for other materials frequently used in both elementary and secondary schools.

When the library houses recordings and filmstrips, equipment for shelving or filing these materials may be in the stack area or in a conference room provided and equipped for viewing and listening.

In some schools, wide shelving for periodical files is provided in the stack area but in other schools this shelving is placed either in the main reading room, the workroom, or in a conference room so that it will be more easily accessible for reference use.

Frequently the stack area is part of the workroom or adjoins it. If considerable stack area is to be included in workroom area, additional floor space should be added to that suggested for the workroom.

**Specifications for Library Housing**

1. Shelving (adjustable)

A. Dimensions

Length of shelves between uprights.....	3 feet
Depth of shelves	
Standard .....	8 inches
Reference .....	12 inches
Periodicals file .....	12 inches
Thickness of shelves.....	7/8 inch
Height of shelving	
Elementary reading room.....	5-6 feet
Junior and/or senior high school reading room...	7 feet
Conference room .....	7 feet
Workroom .....	7 feet
Base .....	4-6 inches
Space between shelves (in the clear)	
Average .....	10 inches
Elementary picture books .....	12-14 inches

B. Capacity estimates

Number of books per linear foot	
Elementary reading room.....	15
Junior-senior high school reading room.....	8

C. Recommended book collection	Enrollment	Volumes	Books per pupil
Elementary school .....	200	4,000	20
	600	7,000	12
	1,000	10,000	10
Junior high school.....	500	7,500	12
	1,000	10,000	10
	1,500	12,000	8
Senior high school .....	500	7,500	12
	1,000	10,000	10
	1,500	12,000	8
	2,000	14,000	7

D. Special shelving

Shelves with dividers every 10-12 inches  
 Slanting shelves for picture books display, newspapers, and magazines

2. Furniture

	Table height	Chair height
Elementary reading room.....	24"-25"-28"	13"-15"-17"
Junior high school reading room.....	27"-30"	17"
Senior high school reading room.....	30"	17"
Conference-workroom .....	30"	17"

Note: Oblong tables are most commonly used.  
 Square, round, square-round are also suitable.

3. Aisle space between tables and shelves..... 3½ feet  
Aisle space between tables with chairs back to back..... 5 feet  
Floor cases
4. Other furniture needed  
Desk — charging — see p. 4  
" — sectional  
" — librarian  
Card catalogue case  
Book truck  
Vertical file cases  
Dictionary stand  
Stools  
Shelf list case