allowing for possible errors in reporting or

The median expenditure for full-time tertiary students
in 1974 was $1,897 with an interquartile range from $1,224 to $2,844.

The respondents were asked to state in detail
the costs they incurred during the calendar year.

The major factor associated with
'elsewhere' spent
was residence. Students living in the parental home
had the highest. Even
students and students under
1974
in courses with shorter vacations, e.g.

T.E.A.S.
Medicine or Pharmacy, had
the five minor categories (each was less than 9 per

Incidentals allowance.

The changes frequently rung in first year political
science courses. He suggests that it might be more
fruitful to alter course structure and learning method
rather than content. Although an introductory
course may be thoughtfully constructed and
intellectually satisfying to its creator, it fails if it does
not hold the interest of its students.

David Stephens in his article “A comment on
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It has only been possible to give a very brief idea
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questions about student finances than there are
answers. It is not known, for example, whether
students who work during the academic year make
poorer academic progress as a result of their need
to earn money. This possibility could only be tested if a
longitudinal study were carried out, but this work is
not being done. Nor is it known to what extent
change in the economic climate since 1974 has
affected the level of student income or the ways in
which it is made up. As none of the student
assistance schemes have kept pace with inflation,
and as work is becoming harder to find, the picture of
students living in the parental home spent a greater proportion of
their budget on travel costs.

Of the five minor categories (each was less than 9 per
cent of the total expenditure) the most relevant was
‘course-related costs’ e.g. union fees, books and the
cost of materials. This item varied greatly according
to course of enrolment with liberal arts students
reporting the lowest costs and medical students
the highest. Even in the lowest cost courses, the median
expenditure on texts exceeded the $100 T.E.A.S.
allowances.

When the income and expenditure figures were
compared, a median deficit of $88 was found. After
allowing for possible errors in reporting or
calculating expenditure, two possibilities remained:
that students were relying on savings or that they
were getting into debt. A quarter of the respondents
said that they were using savings acquired before
1974. There was also some support for the possibility
that some students were getting into debt, in that the
largest deficits were found among ‘no award’ or
T.E.A.S. students. Some of these deficits amounted
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Questions about student finances then are
important. To instruct students “in the techniques of the
discipline”, there is a need to devote time early in
courses to exercises in how to extract the argument
from a piece of writing, how to summarise main
points, how to criticise and how to write an essay or
paper according to a pre-set format and how to
use a reference list.

I would delete “even” from this sentence and insert “certainly” in the use of library catalogues. This is not done purely out of professional chauvinism! The student who cannot use the library’s catalogues efficiently remains dependent on reading lists. As a minimum the first year student should be able to use the library’s catalogues and a general index to journals so as to be able to find both books and periodical articles in his or her chosen area. Because the storage and dissemination of information is the special preserve of libraries, instruction in information searching is an obvious one for co-operation between teaching staff and librarians.

EQUIPPING STUDENTS TO FIND OUT FOR THEMSELVES
Ursula Dash*

F ew would question that a university education should produce independent minds. A necessary
prerequisite for this is the ability to find and evaluate information and to test one’s ideas against those of others. It is also presumed that students should be able to acquire by the mere fact of attending university.

This article will discuss ways in which the university library in co-operation with the teaching staff, can ensure that information gathering techniques become an integral part of the university education of first year students.

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Reader Education

Academic libraries are putting increasing emphasis
on reader education (sometimes called library
instruction) realising that many of their readers do
not possess the skills to utilise the collections fully,
or the awareness of the information potentially
available which would encourage the formulation of
reference queries.

What is meant by reader education will become
clearer in the ensuing discussion of the roles
of departments and the library in increasing the
student’s capacity to find and evaluate information
required in introductory courses. There is no intention whatever that librarians should pre-empt the
role of the teaching staff. It is important to impart
subject knowledge and the criteria for its evaluation.

The purpose of reader education is to give students
an overview of how the literature of their subject is
structured and to equip them with the basic skills for
finding required information efficiently and
confidently. Such training saves students’ time and

*Reader Education Librarian, La Trobe University.
frustration and produces advantages for the academic staff who have less need to provide reading lists and can ask for more adventurous work from their students.

Learning occurs most easily when that which is to be learned is obviously relevant and useful. In the case of first year students literature searching skills would be well learned in the context of the first major exercise or essay, especially if part of the assessment were dependent upon bibliographical expertise.

To take a practical example, suppose that an essay is set for which no reading list is provided. The students know that they are to trace the historical development of a concept, outline the current schools of thought and substantiate their own position. The library is asked to organise a reader education programme to prepare the students to undertake the essay. The librarian involved translates these essay requirements into the literature searching skills necessary to be able to find relevant information. In this case, the student must be able to:

1. use the library's catalogues, especially, the subject catalogue, to discover what relevant books the library has in its collection,
2. use an index to periodical literature to discover journal articles which are especially useful for contemporary developments,
3. interpret footnotes and bibliographical citations so as to follow-up leads found in any of these sources.

All these are bibliographical skills useful in any discipline. The knowledge to impart them and the facilities to do so, are most readily available in the university library. The precise nature of the library's reader education programme will depend partly on the number of students in the introductory course. As enrolments are often one hundred or more, individual or small-group reader education is usually impracticable. The "library lecture" has sometimes been used because it easily reaches the whole group and is, what is most important, during scheduled contact time.

Though it is now to impart practical skills, half an hour of a scheduled lecture can be used to introduce the chosen form of reader education and to make a "library face" familiar and approachable. The latter is essential to the success of reader education for first year students often overwhelmed by the size and complexity of the institution.

Two methods of discovery learning have been used quite successfully with large enrolments in introductory courses at the La Trobe University Library. These are the "Pathfinder" and the self-guided library tour", both of which are appropriate either to broad subjects like history or to specialized areas such as the sociology of groups. In each case the student works along following prescribed steps. Assistance, if needed, is always available from the reference librarians.

Our "Pathfinder", or introductory guides to the literature, have much the same format as those originally produced at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They are printed on A4 systems board (or light card stock) fitting easily into a folder and durable enough to withstand frequent consultation. The sources introduced in each case will be dictated by the needs of the course. Types of information sources are introduced in the order in which they will usually be consulted. Where necessary the scope is indicated and assistance given with the choice of entry point — often a subject heading.

The self-guided tour on audiotape is similar in scope to the pathfinder. The medium has the advantage of providing some of the immediacy and sense of personal contact of the conducted tour. Because the student performs a step in the search and then returns to the tape, likely problems can be anticipated and corrected.

These are two of the reader education approaches used quite successfully with high-enrolment first year subjects at La Trobe University Library. Other methods are available for alternative methods.

The enthusiasm with which these programmes are usually received, and the delight with which students discover simple aids to information'gathering such as periodical indexes, is advanced students. The enthusiasm with which these programmes are usually received, and the delight with which students discover simple aids to information'gathering such as periodical indexes, is evidence of the great need for reader education within university courses.

REFERENCES

2. Ibid. p. 118
3. Ibid. p. 120
4. Ibid. p. 120
5. Ibid. p. 121

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CURRICULAR QUESTIONS AND MODEL ANSWERS: A REPLY

Sir,

Perhaps I might be allowed to pull my crumpled self out of the waste-paper basket into which I have been tossed and reply to Dr. D. K. Wheeler's attack on an article of mine.

First, let me assure him that I am aware of his home-spun product and in a Universities Quarterly article I actually quote Dr. Wheeler's model. In that article I go on to say: "I suggest that these approaches to curriculum development are, to say the very least, not helpful — and they could be damaging." Clearly there are fundamental differences between us! These differences seem to be as follows:

(a) I believe that content can be a fruitful area for deriving course aims and that curriculum theorists should not decry the importance of content in this process;
(b) behavioural objectives have very little use in university education;
(c) models are tools and should be treated as such.

In his book, Dr. Wheeler states "Content is important in so far as it helps to bring about intended outcomes." I believe that content (that body of knowledge that makes a subject what it is) is worthy of a higher place than that, especially in a university. I fancy that most tertiary teachers would also agree with this.

There is a substantial literature arguing the case both for and against behavioural objectives. I will not weary people by repeating the arguments here. However, my work in this university has shown me how inappropriate are behavioural objectives to most areas of education. Such objectives might be of use in training people to perform (say) skills on a factory production line but they do not appear to have much relevance to (say) a course in history. I would, however, put up a spirited fight for a general statement of course aims, suitably illustrated with examples of how they might be achieved and assessed.

I am challenged for stating that "specific objectives are rarely formally assessed" if Dr. Wheeler would care to study recent undergraduate examination papers he would appreciate the truth of my statement. Also, my comment that taxonomies are man-made was a serious one. The damage to education caused by the Bloom taxonomy having been interpreted as some sort of "truth" has yet to be evaluated.

Sirs,

We think it improper that a senior member of academic staff (E.C.B. MacLaurin) should write to Vestea as an academic head on a subject quite outside his discipline. We can only expect him to speak with academic authority in the area of Semitic studies; his attempt to write under the cloak of the Head of a department upon a subject in which he is not professionally expert is a prostitution of his position as a scholar. Who can respect a Professor of (say) Semitic Studies who from his chair advises fellow academics on how best to express their political convictions?

Yours faithfully,

Brahm Dabscheck,
Peter R. Shegold,
School of Economics,
University of New South Wales.
2nd September, 1976.