

Let's Make Them Functional

By Roman G. Costes

FOR the purpose of our article we shall adopt Webster's definition of a library as "a building or any part of a building devoted to a collection of books, manuscripts, etc., kept for study or reading." In the light of this definition we desire to profound the following questions: (1) What are the types of libraries now in existence in the Philippines?, (2) How well are our school libraries equipped and supplied?, (3) Are our school librarians competent and qualified to administer our libraries effectively and efficiently?, (4) What goals and/or objectives do our libraries seek to accomplish?, (5) Are our librarians giving appropriate instructions for the achievement of these objectives?, and (6) What workable program can we suggest for the up-grading of our library instruction?

In attempting to answer the foregoing questions we are going to bring into play much of the results of our personal observations and point out some flaws in the way our libraries function with the end in

view of improving our library services and making this important portion of our educational scheme play its real role.

Types of Libraries

In the opinion of this writer there are now four kinds of libraries commonly used. These are: (a) the central school library, (b) the classroom library, (c) the public and/or community library, and (d) the home library. Of late, the trend among educators is to place emphasis on and popularize the so-called homeroom libraries. Advocates of this new arrangement claim that this is a more advantageous arrangement because books are made available to the pupils at any hour of the day and on all days; that proximity to the homeroom library gives the children early initiation into the uses of books, and that an attractive classroom library helps develop early reading readiness. On the other hand, proponents of the

centralized library plan give these two advantages:¹ (a) it affords the children the experience of selecting using and locating reading materials in a real library situation, and (b) it is more economical than the classroom library plan because it avoids the duplication of books which are needed in one classroom.

These differences of opinion between the proponents of the two plans found solution in the adoption in our schools of a combination of the school and classroom plans in accordance with the availability of funds. In most schools, though, classroom libraries are put up purely on the initiative and resourcefulness of the teachers and the pupils. The less-resourceful and easy-going teachers do not bother at all to organize their own homeroom libraries. Of course much depends also upon the amount of guidance and attention given by the school principals to the plan.

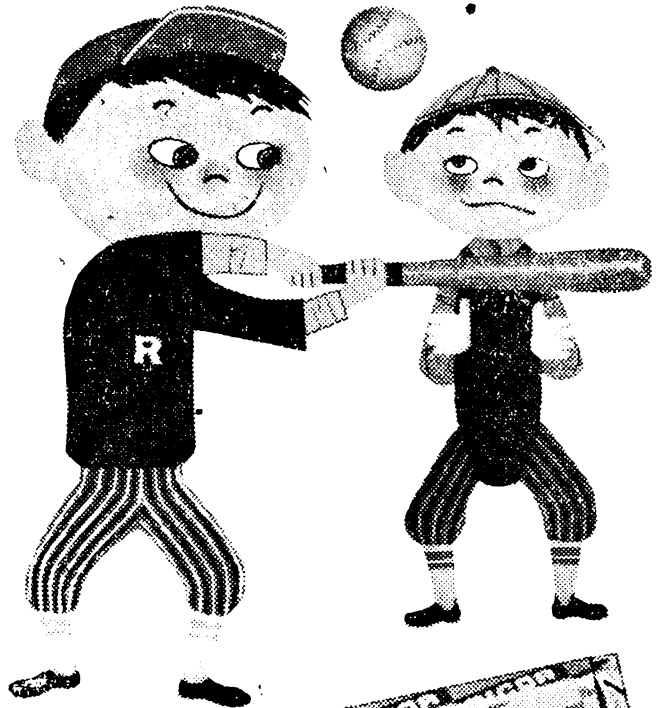
Are Our School and Classroom Libraries Adequately Equipped?

Our answer to this question is both yes and no with the preponderance on the negative side. Not all our schools, after more than ten years since the termination of the last war, have been fully rehabilitated. There was so much destruction and the rehabilitation so slow that our schools, libraries included, may take some more years before they can be restored to their pre-war footing. The hardest hit are the small and poor municipalities where what semblances of the existence of school libraries are in fact small spaces in the school buildings with old and assorted sizes of bookshelves, a few chairs, non-standard tables and very old if not obsolete and very inadequate books. Without a definite source of funds for the library except its 60% share of the tuition fees of intermediate pupils which is supposed to be for library books, its restoration to its pre-war vintage depends largely upon the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the school personnels from the field supervisors down to the classroom teachers. To the well deserved credit of these people we shall mention here that they have amply met the challenge of their respective duties and that they are indefatigably working hard to improve the situations in their schools.

In most big schools the school libraries are almost completely rehabilitated. We have seen some of these which have even surpassed their pre-war conditions. Library tables and chairs, racks, display and book shelves are adequately provided. Glass-paneled shelves are found in some schools and various visual teaching helps are abundantly displayed. With the exception of the books and other reading materials which are still inadequate, these big libraries are almost complete.

1. Elwood P. Cubberly, Public School Administration.

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This contrasting advance of the more progressive schools is due, in no small measure, to the valuable help of the PTA's and some other civic-conscious people in the various communities who made donations varying from petty cash to miscellaneous materials and equipment as are mentioned in the foregoing paragraph. The teachers, too, in most instances, have dug deep into their pockets and contributed in the improvement of their schools.

Of importance to every school library are the following supplies and equipment which we noted are lacking in our libraries:² a catalog case, containing four drawers for small schools and from six to ten drawers for larger schools; a rubber stamp bearing the name of the library; several portable book trough for holding and displaying collections of books; a teacher's desk and chair; a dictionary-encyclopedia stand built with a sloping top to serve as a bookrest; a bulletin board and when possible, a sink and running water to provide the pupils with handy washing facilities.

There is, of course, the adequate provision and selection of books, magazines and other reading materials which we should also pay equal attention to. We wish to point here the appropriateness of all reading matters with which our libraries should be stocked. A cursory inspection of the books in our libraries will bring out the fact not only of the inadequacy of our books but also of their inappropriateness. They are either too old or obsolete, or are beyond the levels of understanding of our pupils. A library to become effective and useful to all pupils should be equipped with reading materials which are good for all capacity levels of the children. It is important therefore that great care in the selection of books should be exercised. The practice of placing the responsibility of ordering books, magazines, etc., in the hands of a single person, very likely the principal, should be changed. A good plan is to create a committee composed of the teacher-librarian and representative teachers from each grade to study and select appropriate reading matters from approved book lists. After making their selections they make and forward their recommendations to the principal who is the requisitioning officer of the school. In this way can we insure the acquisition of interesting and appropriate reading materials for our libraries and children.

Our School Librarians

The librarian is the most important single item in establishing a school library. The failure or success of this phase of school work rests on the shoulders of this personnel. In choosing one, we should be sure that he is highly qualified for the position

2. Ritter & Shepherd, *Methods of Teaching in Town and Rural Schools*.

not only from the standpoint of his knowledge of the profession but also in his understanding of the problems of the library from the classroom angle. A good librarian should also know the courses of study and is familiar with classroom methods as well as with library practices. In other words, his success in library work depends upon these qualifications: (a) he should, first of all, be an excellent teacher, (b) he should have sound training for school library work, and (c) he should possess a personality that will allow a happy cooperation with other members of the teaching staff.

From these standards let us assess the qualities and fitness of our school librarians. Except, probably in very rare cases, most of those given the charge of the libraries are regular classroom teachers. No separate item for the position of a full-time librarian is provided for in our plantilla which discounts the possibility of employing a professional librarian in the elementary schools. What our administrators do is to assign teacher-librarians who teach part of the day and have charge of the library during the remainder of the day. In schools where there are teachers who have had little training in library work or who have taken some courses in library science the problem of selecting the librarian isn't as difficult as in schools where none among the teachers have experiences and/or knowledge of the work. Unfortunately, there are not very many among our teachers who have taken interest and fondness for courses in library science so that, by and large, most of our teacher-librarians are not competently qualified for their assignments. In most cases they develop their competencies in the work through self-study and after undergoing some years of the trial-and-error experiences. And when the school head is himself without any training in library work, the results will be hard to imagine.

Under such conditions as described above, the library ceases to be an important part in the reading program of the school. The teacher-librarian is reduced to the status of a caretaker whose duties are to see that the library is clean and orderly, to arrange and re-arrange the books and magazines and to attend only to the physical aspects of the room. Of cataloguing, indenting, classifying, teaching the uses of books, working out a program of and scheduling classes for library work, and helping classroom teachers in giving research assignments, very little if at all, are given. The library is reduced to the state of display room, neatly arranged and kept, supplied and equipped, but very seldom, if ever, utilized. In some schools, it is even completely neglected. No wonder, our elementary pupils do not even know how to borrow books, how to locate and return the books properly, how to use reference materials and other activities in connection with library work. Seldom,

if ever, can we now see pupils going to the library to read newspapers, to engage in some form of free-reading activity and to borrow books and magazines for home reading. This implies that due to our deficient program of library instruction we are sadly neglecting the principal role of our libraries to develop a wholesome liking for books.

Goals and Objectives of Library Instruction.

To better understand and appreciate the importance of the library, let us look into its aims and functions in connection with its relation to a good reading program. These are:³ (a) to offer a place with an appropriate atmosphere for the development of reading as a permanent habit in children, (b) to provide opportunities for wide reading in the field of literature, (c) to encourage children to use books other than basal texts to enrich the content subjects, and (d) to meet individual as well as group needs. A well-managed and well-equipped library gives satisfaction to the superior child who always hanker for new materials to read. It likewise meets the needs of the other children of varied capacities. A well-managed library also offers no better place for the children to cultivate a healthy liking for books, to learn to work independently and efficiently, to share their vicarious book experiences with their classmates by recommending to them interesting and appropriate reading matters, to develop self-control and consideration for others and to learn desirable habits in the use of the library.

Are Our Libraries Giving Appropriate Instructions for the Achievement of the Intended Goals?

Our answer here is definitely "NO." As we had adverted in an earlier paragraph, our libraries, most of them that is, are more of display rooms rigged up and arranged more for the delight consumption of visitors' eyes than for the functional use of the children in the promotion of their permanent reading habits. In one school we observed that the library work given to the pupils throughout the school year consisted only of teaching the pupils how to use the library cards in borrowing books. In another school a few homeroom classes were taken to the library by the classroom teachers to show the physical arrangement of the equipment and books and still in another school we failed to observe any library activity at all. We have not seen such signs of useful library work as free reading by pupils, borrowing books and/or magazines for home reading, borrowing books and/or magazines for reference work, participation of pupils in managing the library, records of pupils' accomplishments in library reading, schedule of classes to use the library, etc. In other words, there is no systematic procedure followed in programming the library activities.

3. Gertrude Hildreth, *Readiness for School Beginners*.

The same is true with the homeroom libraries. After installing some kind of a library table and a few chairs in the library corner, a few books and old magazines from the school's storeroom, the activity ends. The excitement, the enthusiasm, and the interests manifested earlier during the initiation of the activity just fizzle away after a few days until everything completely calms down. Asked why the activity was abandoned, the teachers invariably answer that they have no source and/or sources from which to draw enough materials for their library tables. This is neglected one of the best means of developing the reading competencies of the pupils and other useful habits essentially necessary in their later lives.

A Proposed Program.

Here is a program proposed by an educator⁴ which is worth looking into. We are inviting all school administrators concerned with the supervision of the library activities in their respective schools to give this program a serious and careful study to see if it can be adopted to help improve our library activities.

How Children Use the Library

"Each class in the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades spends one half hour everyday in the library. The time allotted for the different kinds of activities is approximately as follows:

Literary appreciation — one day per week.

Instruction in library technic — one day per week.

Free reading and reading on assignments — three days per week.

"**Literary appreciation**—Literary appreciation consists of such activities as story telling, reading to the class, group discussions of poems and stories, book reviews, and talks on children's authors and illustrations.

"In story telling and reading to the class no hard and fast rule is followed as to the choice of stories. The ages and interests of the children determine the stories selected. Poetry as well as prose is read to the class. Humor and nonsense are also given a place, and the teacher enjoys the selections with the class.

"In group discussions of poems and stories the children have an opportunity to tell others about what they have read. Freedom of expression is encouraged, especially in telling why they like or do not like certain books, stories, or poems.

"Written book reviews are used sparingly because they can easily become tiresome to children and can take away much of the joy of reading. Oral reviews

4. Ruth Strang, *The Role of the Teacher in Personnel Work*.

are given a place during this period, and most children enjoy telling about books that interest them. Both oral and written book reviews are kept enjoyable.

“Children seldom notice the names of authors or illustrators. Therefore the teacher-librarians try to create an interest in them as real people. The birthday of an author or an illustrator is sometimes observed by having a picture and brief notes of interest about him placed on the bulletin board. A collection of books written or illustrated by him may be placed on a display table or shelf near the bulletin board. The aim is to get children to become so familiar with the author that they will associate his name with his books, and will eventually learn to ask for books by authors.

“Instruction in library usage — The following topics are studied in lessons on library usage. The teacher should adjust the work to the ages and abilities of the pupils:

A. Classification —

1. Books are in classes
2. Books have numbers as houses have numbers
3. They must return to their right homes after visits to pupils
4. Books are arranged alphabetically within classes
5. Small numbers begin on the left and large numbers on the right of each shelf

B. The Parts of a Book —

1. Title page
2. Table of contents
3. Index
4. Important terms such as author, illustrator, title, publisher, place published and date.

C. The Card Catalog —

1. Cards arranged in alphabetical order
2. How to arrange words in alphabetical order
3. Use of guide cards
4. Use of author, subject, and title cards.

D. The Dictionary —

1. Guide words
2. Alphabetical arrangement of words
3. Pronouncing words
4. Definition of words
5. Diacritical marks

E. The Encyclopedia —

1. Alphabetical arrangement
2. Purpose of encyclopedia
3. How to locate material
4. Use of subtopics
5. How to use cross references

6. How to use related topics

7. Use of charts, diagrams, and illustrations

F. Yearbooks, Almanacs, Magazines and other Materials.

“Free reading and reading on assignments — By free reading is meant an activity in which the children, with guidance and help from the teacher-librarian, select their own materials for reading. One important phase of this activity is the opportunity of children to browse during the library period. This period also offers an opportunity for the teacher-librarian to find what the real interest of pupils are, and to use this information in helping pupils who seem to have little or no desire to read.

“Interest in this type of reading is stimulated during the literary appreciation period. Various devices, such as having books opened at interesting illustrations, placing book jackets or other illustrations of stories on the bulletin boards, reading or telling parts of stories, allowing children to report on books they have read, and keeping individual reading cards, are helpful in arousing a desire to read.”

To follow the scheme proposed above it's imperative for those in charge of preparing the classroom program to work cooperatively with the school librarian so that the period allotted for library work may be incorporated in the general program. The significant role of our libraries should be given full recognition if we are to get the best possible benefits out of them.

Here are some forms of book reports⁵ which can be adopted by homeroom teachers and the teacher-librarians as effective devices to check on the outside and free readings of the pupils. These are suggestive forms which can stand improvement by the resourceful and practical teacher.

I. Form of Book Report in Grade IV.

BOOK REPORT¹
Fourth Grade

Title of Book

Name of Author

What is the book about?

.....

Name one person in the book and tell something about him

.....

.....

Why I like the book

.....

.....

Name Grade Date

⁵ Seventh Yearbook, NEA, *Newer Practices in Reading in the Elementary School*.

II. Book Report in Grade V & VI.

BOOK REPORT
5th & 6th Grade

Title of Book
 Author's Name
 Setting
 What is the book about?

Present sufficient evidence to show you are acquainted with the book

Name Grade Date

III. Report on Fiction in Grade V & VI.

BOOK REPORT
Fiction

Title of Book
 Author's Name

Setting

Name and describe the main character

Give the opening situation, point of highest interest, and the closing situation

Reader's criticism

Name Grade Date

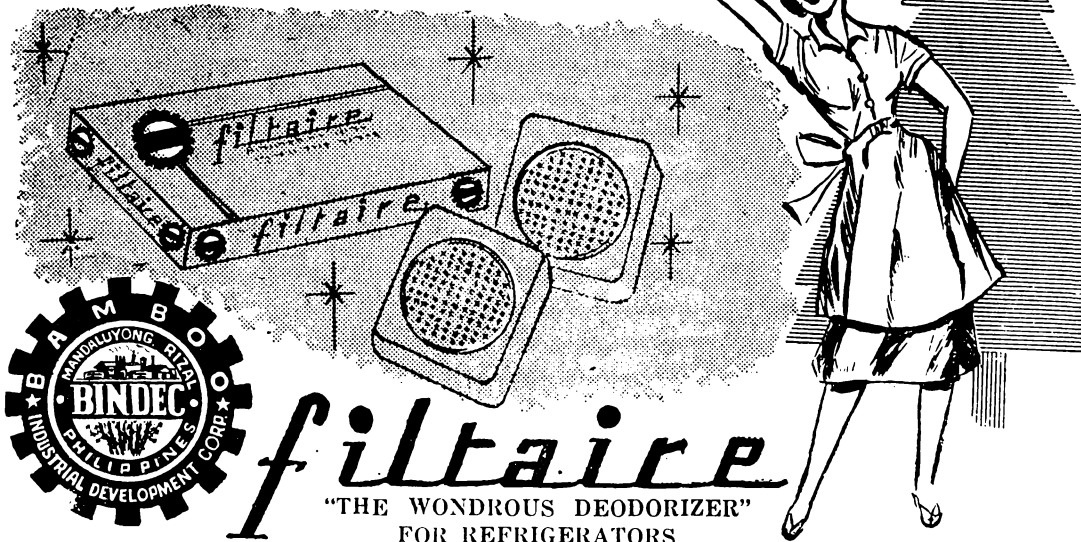
IV. Report on Non-Fiction, Grade V & VI.

BOOK REPORT
Non-Fiction

Title of Book
 Author's Name
 What is the book about?

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 Describe the most interesting part of the book

 What information did you gain?

 Reader's criticism

 Name Grade Date

These book reports may be made monthly in partial fulfillment of the pupils' requirement in reading. Done regularly with sincerity of purpose it will go a long way in the functional and progressive use of the library, in the cultivation of love for wholesome books, in the systematic recording of impressions gained from reading, and in developing the pupils' reading comprehension.

Another device in encouraging pupils to read, especially the various magazines, consists of a record sheet which may be posted in a strategic place nearest the magazine section of the school library. As soon as a pupil has read, partly or in whole, a magazine he records it in the record sheet. As many of these sheets may be made corresponding to the number of readable magazines as are available in the library.

These record sheets should be evaluated from time to time and a summary chart of some kind may be devised where the free readings of the pupils are recorded and kept. This will enable the teacher-librarian know those pupils who are consistently keeping up with the work and those who need more help and motivation.

Here is a sample of a record sheet for magazine reading:

TITLE OF MAGAZINE: Nature Magazine, June, 1957

Name of Pupils	Title of Articles	Date of Magazine	Pages Read		Comments Excellent, Good, Poor
			Whole	Fraction	
1. Lester	The Yellow Canyon	June	3	1/2	Excellent
2. Nora	The Yosemite Valley	June	2	1/2	Excellent
3. Alberto	The Case of Reddy	June	4		Good
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
etc.					

Teacher-Librarian _____

Our Recommendations.

We wish to recommend the following measures which, we believe, can help much in improving the quality use of our libraries:

a. A separate item for a full-time school librarian be provided for in the elementary school plantilla. This will allow for the employment of a highly qualified librarian in each central school who can devote his full time to his duties and responsibilities.

b. In the meantime that recommendation 1 cannot yet be implemented, all teacher-librarians may be encouraged to take courses leading to Library Science Major.

c. Teacher-librarians should be encouraged to attend workshop-conferences which should be held as often as possible.

d. School supervisors and principals should be encouraged to take up refresher courses in library science so that they can become more competent in guiding and supervising the work of their teacher-librarians.

e. The government should subsidize our school libraries in order to equip them fully and provide them with rich and appropriate reading matters.

Conclusion.

We tried to record in this article our honest and candid personal impressions of the ways our libraries are put into use. It is our sincere and considered belief that we have not been making profitable use of these very important media of education and if we express our criticisms here in rather bold terms it is because we are motivated by a strong desire to see others of our colleagues take up the cue and work for the elimination of the deficiencies enumerated in this report, presupposing that these also exist in their respective schools. Let us contemplate on the meaning of what this author⁶ meant when he said this, "The skill and judgment with which a child learns to use the library probably determine to a large degree the cultural level he will attain in adult life." This will give us a clear insight of the importance of our school libraries.

References:

6. E.P.O'Reilly, Providing Library Facilities in the School, p. 495.