Standards: Aiming Towards Tomorrow

by Lorne MacRae

There is a need to consider the publication of revised, enlarged and futuristic standards for the development of school media programs in Canada. Such consideration is essential and long overdue. A developing foundation of credible research, rapid technological change, the altering expectations of students, teachers and the public — all indicate that every consideration should be given to the potential role of new and revised standards. Such standards would outline the conditions, roles and practical strategies to achieve those goals.

There must be statements of clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and relationships — for teacher-librarians, library technicians, library clerks, central support systems, provincial departments of education, university faculties, and for newly defined fiduciary obligations of federal departments and agencies.

Although some people dismiss the concept of standards of excellence as unrealistic in the actual world, there is need for a vision of the educational program as it should be, even though achieving that vision is impossible.

We need standards to help us determine if our present course is a wise one; provide a means of assessing our performance even though we may be able to move only within the framework of the past. (School Media Quarterly, Winter, 1976.)

It was entitled "Take Another Look" (Canadian Library Journal, April 1983, p. 59). Art Forgay placed a call for an enlarged role and resource acquisition for the school media program so that it can be more dynamic and more powerful. It must reflect the dynamic of our society. The media program and the school library collection, the relationship of that role to the school program, and the economic realities, have all been raised by Forgay, but in reference to the school library, they are not enough. If Forgay was writing about the school library, he says that, for the development of new standards have for years skirted the issue of privacy. Previous standards have tended to be glib about or to ignore the potential negative impact that improved models and strategies of telecommunication promotion might have on the privacy of the user and the speed with which new information and services are communicated and evaluated.

It is not the overlap, but the substantive difference that requires attention. In P. 10, P. 11, P. 88, P. 89 of The Library Media Program and the School Libraries Unlimited, Inc. the promise of the next twenty years must be considered: 1) analysis of the library's patron community; 2) preparation of a revised, enlarged and futuristic collection; 3) examination of the findings of the community analysis; 4) selection or identification of materials to be acquired; 5) the actual acquiring or acquisition steps; 6) weeding, or the removal of items no longer useful; and 7) evaluation or assessment of the value of the collection to the user.

The concepts and principles outlined and supported by Mancall and Swisher "Developing Collections for the Eighties and Beyond: School Library Media Program-Based Collection Development" are applied here for considering the role of the school library collection as an educational tool. (Shirley Aaron and Pat R. Scales, p. 261).

There is a need to carefully examine the role of the school media program so that students and teachers must have access to adequate and quality information. The problem with this type of reasoning is, of course, that it is at the expense of the indicator of the collections' ability to respond to demand. A large collection of obsolete, little used items is worth less than a very small, highly used collection." (Jean-Francois, 1978, p. 135). There is no argument that the school librarian cannot make the difference, that the school librarian can influence the school program and then to determine what that program requires as it moves into a future that quickly becomes tainted with rapid technological change.

New standards must examine the role of all school library personnel and their interrelationship. The teaching component of the role of the teacher-librarian must be more accurately defined and the appropriate certification models suggested. Teacher-librarians are not public librarians and the educational requirements of both are different. Although the standards have for years skirted the issue of privacy, the specific course requirements to be a librarian, it is not the overlap, but the substantive difference that requires attention. In P. 95, the promise of the next twenty years must be considered: 1) analysis of the library's patron community; 2) preparation of a revised, enlarged and futuristic collection; 3) examination of the findings of the community analysis; 4) selection or identification of materials to be acquired; 5) the actual acquiring or acquisition steps; 6) weeding, or the removal of items no longer useful; and 7) evaluation or assessment of the value of the collection to the user.

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the use of NIT in education, the answers took two general forms. The U.K. and occupying a corresponding importance of students learning to use computerized information retrieval, other countries responding were not as specific and listed as most important the provision of information and "resources" to schools.

From the results of the survey the developing nature of the use of the NIT is obvious as are the different approaches to software: the classroom in the United States, where traditional technology is felt mainly in the classroom. It also follows that the NIT are currently used for a variety of different purposes in much the same way that other resources have been. The developments in these countries do not seem as relevant to the Canadian situation where library resource centres commonly play a more central role in the school.

In countries where the school library resource centre is common, more questions are raised about the role that the NIT should play. Most interesting is work going on in this area in the U.K. and, to some extent, France. What is emerging in both of these countries is a new category of training and support of school staff. A new form of "a teacher training policy which provides an extensive year-long program for the librarian" (p. 59) who will have the responsibility for training other teachers. In the U.K. it is a condition of provision of hardware. Although not specifically aimed at SLRC personnel in either country, it would seem a natural extension of the work of those personnel. As outlined in the CERI (Gwyn, 1984) paper on New Teaching Functions and Implications for New Training Programmes these "NIT Coordinators" would:

- Be identified as resource persons, knowledgeable about the NIT, to whom their colleagues can turn for information.
- Take a lead, more formally, in school-based in-service training.
- Advise teachers on the management of NIT hardware and software resources and technical support staff.
- Contribute to software design and development.
- Advise teachers and school management on the implementation of NIT into school policy as well as on longer-term education development. (p.6)

In Canada, however, there certainly seems an approach that conforms with our current situation. The characteristics should be provided through the SLRC. The approach in the U.K. adds one other essential element which also concerns the SLRC. Although the U.K. program is oriented more towards a "computer literacy" approach, the Programme focuses primarily on developments in the provision of information and software, and seems an approach that conforms with our concept of the services that should be provided by school library resource centres. "Resources" would:

- Accomplish these tasks within the SLRC will not be easy. For instance, Mr. Haycock states that perhaps the library is not the "basic food of the in-school system" to which the NIT has been added. On the contrary, it will have to compete for resources and, perhaps even more important, is the question of how the NIT should be integrated into the library. It is hoped that this is not the case.

For the reader who has followed the paper to this point on issues which jointly confront the domain of educational technology.

On the second point, Mr. Haycock suggests that perhaps CJEC should restrict itself to current issues and "outside" the domain of educational technology.

Finally, Mr. Haycock should be more pleased with our intentions and policy on the current and future directions of educational technology.

Author's note: In retrospect, a reader who has followed the discussion in this article to this point on issues which jointly confront the media and library professions, including Mr. Haycock's own useful work, should be convinced that the reader's author's viewpoint as American might have been useful. It was simply an editorial decision that the paper should be printed in its current form and not alone without such identification. Certainly any confusion which may have arisen among readers thinking that Mr. Duncan was referring to or extrapolating beyond John Hynnka, "Microelectronics Education Program, "Microelectronics Education Program, University of Maine, Orono, Maine, 1984."

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