

The role of the librarian in curriculum development

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This relevant topic was the theme of the NIS study day on 7 December. Tony Shepherd, Librarian of the Royal College of Nursing was the study day organiser and moderator. Speakers were given a fair amount of time to develop their ideas. In addition, there were opportunities for general discussion. Each speaker used a different technique and presentations were varied.

Stella Pendleton, Principal Lecturer on Curriculum Development at the Institute of Advanced Nursing Education, RCN, led off with a discussion on curriculum development, mainly from a nursing viewpoint. Course members were broken up into groups to discuss the meaning of curriculum and how to plan a study day on Project 2000.

Her ideas on curriculum development groups, a description of the course approval process and the librarian's role in curriculum development were backed up with statements from various books on curriculum plus quotations from the ENB guidelines and criteria for course development. Most of her points along with quotations and a bibliography appeared in a booklet given to each course participant - a very useful document. The session made a very good introduction not

only to the topic, but also to the people sitting next to each other.

Martin Allen, Open Learning Development, Somerset Education Authority, spoke on the library as a central resource. The library should not be rigid, but rather an active place - interacting with the people it serves on both sides of the learning process. The other key to his presentation was that teamwork is the key to success. He stressed that the librarian should be involved in the team effort of creating the learning process.

Martin feels that the librarian helps the learning process by providing a receptive environment, counselling and support when trying to locate information for clients. The librarian's strengths are that she sees all levels of need, and all aspects of the curriculum.

From a more practical standpoint, Jean Yeo, Tutor-Librarian at St George's Hospital, gave a step-by-step explanation of how she became involved in curriculum development. Jean explained how she moved from involving her own library committee in deciding that she should be included, to actually discussing curriculum with curriculum group leaders. For

librarians who want to get involved in curriculum, she recommended keeping up to date with educational literature, putting requests in writing, going to teachers' meetings, getting on to academic boards, and obtaining a teaching qualification. A helpful diagram to understand the interaction between tutor, learner and student is worth reproducing:

Librarian not involved =

Teacher <-- Learner --> Librarian

Librarian involved =

Teacher <----> Librarian

Learner

[Personally I have found that the following works even better!]

Teacher <----> Librarian

Learner

Though the discussion session occasionally slid off into the perennial problem of inadequate funding, some points are worth repeating:

1. Teams need not be formal but if they are, action plans approved only in principle are not likely to succeed.
2. There are areas for development which do not cost money and hence are

easier to put into practice.

3. If tactfully addressed, information skills updates for tutors can be very beneficial.
4. It is necessary to change the expectations of what a library can do.

My first reaction to this study day was that it was too theoretical and that ideas were very nebulous. Examples as to the exact role of the librarian were hinted at rather than stated outright. On reviewing my notes, however, I found that there was a great deal more substance than I had thought. But the meeting only touched on the surface.

Nursing librarians need to start with Stella's quotations and understanding of the way nursing curricula are developed. Using this framework we should then read both from her bibliography and from books dealing with the librarian as an educator such as Ruth Davies' The School Library Media Centre: a Force for Educational Excellence and Lillian Wehmeyer's The School Librarian as Educator. It would then be helpful to enter into dialogues with other librarians, creating one of Martin's teams for mutual support. With evidence and quotations in hand and the support of colleagues, it is then possible to use Jean's procedure for getting involved curriculum development teams.