A study of the student assistants in a selected group of Negro Colleges: the selection training and duties

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A STUDY OF STUDENT ASSISTANTS IN A SELECTED GROUP OF NEGRO COLLEGES: THE SELECTION, TRAINING AND DUTIES

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN LIBRARY SERVICE

BY
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SCHOOL OF LIBRARY SERVICE

ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Student assistants are employed in many college and university libraries and probably there are very few librarians who do not consider using them. The various duties which they perform have lightened the load of the professional staff, therefore enabling professional librarians to give more assistance to clients and to do more extensive research. The employment of student assistants has also helped them to acquire knowledge about the resources of the library sometimes over and above that of the non-student assistant, thus helping them to do better work in class assignments. And finally, the employing of student assistants has inspired some students to become future librarians. In many cases student assistants are looked upon as a problem, but a necessary one.

Purposes

The present study was made during the academic year of 1955-56. Its purpose was to survey (1) the current methods used in selecting student assistants; (2) the procedures of training; and (3) the duties assigned to assistants.
Limitations

This study is limited to six Negro liberal arts universities and colleges where student assistants are employed in the libraries. One state supported and one private institution were chosen from three states. These are: North Carolina College at Durham, in Durham, North Carolina; Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina; Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee, Florida; Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida; Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The study assumed that (1) there is general agreement that a limited number of student helpers is valuable in college libraries, (2) there are various opinions as to the method of selection, the procedure of training and duties assigned, and (3) there are various policies regarding the hours of service and wages paid to assistants.

Significance

This study is significant in that it brings the evidence of current practices to the consideration of the selection, training and duties of student assistants in a selected group of Negro colleges. The findings may help to improve the practices in these and other colleges and may contribute to an awareness of the great potentialities of recruiting for the training of librarians.
Definitions

For the purpose of this study, a "student assistant" may be defined as a student employed part time in the library of a university or college, to perform non-technical or non-professional duties under the supervision of the professional staff; sometimes working voluntarily but usually paid.1

Methodology

The data for this study were collected by mail questionnaire. Literature in the field was surveyed to formulate the questionnaire pertaining to the selection, training and duties of student assistants. On April 6, 1956, two copies of the questionnaire, an accompanying letter, and a stamped self-addressed envelope were sent to the librarians of the six colleges used in the study, to be filled out with the assistance of the library staff members. The questionnaires were returned and were analyzed and interpreted. College catalogs were secured from the registrar's office of each college in order to obtain basic information about the colleges and their libraries. The analyzed data were organized into chapters including the Introduction; Date About the Colleges and Libraries Included in the Study; Selection of Student Assistants; Training and Duties of Student Assistants; and Summary and Recommendations.

Related Studies on Student Assistants

In a study of this type it seems fitting to review some of the literature which is related to the problem:

In Miss Helen M. Brown's study of the "Conditions Contributing to the Efficient Service of Student Assistants In a Selected Group of College Libraries",¹ she investigated six colleges for women namely: Barnard, Mount Holyoke, Radcliffe, Smith, Vassar and Wellesley. All of the institutions are located either in Massachusetts or New York. In this study she found that the control of the appointment and dismissal of student assistants is vested in the library. Students are appointed on the basis of the following qualifications: the financial need of the student, the educational value to the student of the work to be assigned, career interest, and finally on the basis of their qualifications for the work to be assigned. Miss Brown noted that all of the libraries used student assistants at the loan desk. Four libraries reported that students were assigned to placing books on reserve. Shelving, typing and the remaining duties mentioned were assigned to students in fewer than four libraries each.

The factors determining the cost of student assistant

¹Helen M. Brown, "Conditions Contributing to the Efficient Service of Student Assistants In a Selected Group of College Libraries" (unpublished Master's thesis, School of Library Service, Columbia University, 1942), p. 46.
service considered in the study are the rate of payment and the cost in staff time for training and supervision, as governed by the number of hours the student works. All of the libraries reported that student wages varied with the type of work and the skills of the student. One library reported that it paid a higher rate to student who work at undesirable hours. Another raises the rate of the payment five cents an hour after the first ten hours of work, except for watch duty.¹

The cost of student assistant service in the group is comparatively high in the training factor because of the small number of hours per week that most of the students work. The median figures range from 5.03 to 10 hours per week. Several of the libraries use mimeographed instructions, group talks, and student assistant staff meetings in an effort to reduce the cost of training and supervision.²

Miss Modena A. Brown wrote a thesis entitled "Student Assistants in College and University Libraries", in 1954 and concluded that:

After having considered the various problems in employing student assistants in the college or university library, one realizes that there are many factors involved in the use of student assistants. In general, smaller libraries will have more successful results than large university libraries with their more complex organization. In the smaller library a more personal relationship can be maintained. Regardless of size, however, there can be the recognition of the assistants as intelligent human beings, not just machines to do work.

¹Ibid., p. 47.
²Ibid.
Too, in order to have successful results from student help, each library will have certain policies to determine to meet its own individual needs.

An important problem to be considered in using student assistants is their selection. Since the quality of service of a library largely depends on their ability, there must be a wise and careful selection.

The duties of student assistants will vary with libraries. Although the importance of duties varies, the assistant should realize that any work necessary to be done in a library is important. The librarian, on the other hand, should realize that there is a waste of talent if qualified professional persons are forced to do much of what could be done by lesser trained persons. If carefully selected students are properly trained and supervised, they can satisfactorily handle much of the routine work. Any work that can be done by students to relieve professional workers, who can assist in educational service, benefits the library and its patrons.¹

In the study of the "Use of Student Assistants in College Libraries of North Carolina," which includes 21 senior colleges for white students, 12 Negro colleges and 21 junior colleges, Mary Fisher concluded that:

Certain facts were found to be true in the study of the ratio of full-time staff to student staff:

1. The ratio of student help to full time staff is greater in the colleges with an enrollment of fewer than one thousand students than it is in the colleges with an enrollment of three thousand or more students.

2. The average number of clerical assistants is never more than 20 per cent of the average number of student assistants. Eleven senior colleges, six Negro colleges, and fourteen junior colleges do not employ any clerical assistants.

3. The average number of hours that each student works per week varies in the different

colleges, and also among different assistants in the same college.

The two most important factors in the selection of student assistants are: (1) the ability of the student to do the work assigned; and (2) the need of the student for remunerative work. Special consideration is also given students who are interested in library work as a career.

The minimum hourly rate of pay for a student assistant is $.20 while the maximum hourly rate of pay is $1.25. In general the colleges with more than three thousand students pay a higher wage than the colleges with fewer students. The variation appears chiefly among institutions rather than within an institution.

Librarians agree that certain qualifications are desirable in student assistants. Loan desk work is the only type of work common to student assistants in all the libraries included in the study.1

"The Selection, Training and Use of Student Assistants in the Libraries of the Teachers Colleges of the State of New Jersey During the Second Semester of the College Year 1951-52", by Charles Packard contains the following information:

The work scholarship program, as instituted by the New Jersey State Legislature is the determining factor in the operation of the student assistant program in the libraries of the State's teachers colleges.2

Selection in the New Jersey colleges may be made from fifteen percent of the student body. All of the colleges impose an academic standard which must be maintained in order


to be employed and to hold a job. All of the librarians have the power to employ and dismiss students. The problem of selection seems to lie in the fact that there are not enough applications for work scholarships and this causes difficulty in securing sufficient help for the libraries. This is probably due to the fact, as two colleges reported, that they must compete with work within the college that offers more pay than the library can offer. Another college states that it is at a disadvantage because it has to compete in an off-campus labor market. It is also the policy of the colleges to credit toward payment, in full or in part, tuition charges. The present rate of pay is $0.65 per hour. In an 18-week semester a student cannot work more than 77 hours.1

With respect to the training programs, Charles Packard reported that:

The training programs of the colleges vary considerably. All of them make some use of individual instruction and considerable use of the techniques of apprenticing new assistants to older ones. Use is made of student assistant manuals, instruction sheets, etc., in most of the libraries. Group instruction is at an absolute minimum because of the practical impossibility of getting the students all assembled at one time, due to their varying schedules. None of the colleges has attempted to make a formal evaluation of their training program. The training programs for student assistants in these libraries have been largely a hit or miss development according to the needs of the moment, with little or no attempt at developing a standardized procedure.2

1Ibid., p. 41.
2Ibid.
The duties of the assistants are assigned on the basis of their abilities. Five colleges mentioned that they evaluate the work of the students and that promotions are made as the students' responsibilities increase.1

In 1948, Howard Winger made a study entitled, "A Personnel Program for Student Assistants in University Libraries", and reported that:

Scores of student assistants on the National Institute of Industrial Psychology Clerical Test, percentile rankings of student assistants on the American Council on Education, Psychological Examination, and all university grade point averages of student assistants were correlated with the efficiency ratings of the student assistants. No significant correlation was obtained for any of the groups ranging from thirty-one to fifty assistants. It seems evident that such general measures are inapplicable as selection criteria where the requirements of the job of the student assistant are single and easily learned as they are for most of the jobs of the group in question.

A classification and pay plan and a promotion system were put into effect for forty-three students working in the Circulation Department of the University of Illinois Library. The evidence of a student assistant questionnaire shows that this increased the faith of the students in their ability to obtain raises in pay and promotions to more interesting jobs, even though they thought the classification faulty. An expanded training program preparing students for promotion and emphasizing the broader interests of librarianship was instituted in the stacks publication, the Ten Stacker and Page News. The evidence of an objective test shows a departmental publication to be an effective training device. The significant correlation of the test scores with the efficiency ratings of the thirty-two students tested shows that the assistants who did the best on this training did the best work.2

1Ibid.

CHAPTER II

DATA ABOUT THE COLLEGES AND LIBRARIES INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

The college library is an operating unit within the greater whole of the college itself. Therefore, in order to make a study of some phase of work in the library it is essential to secure basic information about the college involved. Such information would throw light and understanding upon the reasons for the existence of the present conditions and practices.

Florida A. and M. University

The Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University is located in Tallahassee, Florida, approximately 170 miles west of Jacksonville, near the northern boundary of the state. It holds membership in the following educational associations and has been fully approved by the indicated accrediting agencies: the American Council on Education, the Association of American Colleges, the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes, the Department of Education of the State of Florida, the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the National Nursing Accrediting Service, the Florida State Board of Nurse Registration and Nursing Education, the American Association of Colleges for
Teacher Education, and "A" accreditation by the American Council of Pharmaceutical Education.\(^1\) By an Act of the Florida Legislature, the institution became a state university on September 1, 1953.\(^2\) The Bachelor of Arts or the Bachelor of Science degree is awarded by the undergraduate schools of the University. It functions to develop men and women for productive citizenship, effective service and responsible leadership.\(^3\)

According to the college bulletin the enrollment for 1955-56 was 4,134. The library contains over 64,000 volumes.\(^4\) Its staff consists of 12 persons; three professional librarians, the head librarian, a cataloger and a circulation librarian. There is one full-time staff member in each of the following departments: circulation, acquisitions, reference, periodicals and government documents. There are two full-time staff members in the reserve and cataloging departments and two full-time clerical workers employed in the library. Twenty-six student assistants are employed in the various departments of the library: 11 in general circulation, eight in the reserve book room, three in the catalog department, two in the reference room and one each with periodicals and government documents.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 3.
\(^3\)Ibid.
\(^4\)Ibid.
Southern University is located at Scotlandville, Louisiana, five miles north of Baton Rouge and 89 miles from New Orleans. It is accredited as Class "A" by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and by the Louisiana State Department of Education. It is also rated as an approved senior college by the American Medical Association.  

Southern University was chartered by the General Assembly of the State of Louisiana in the City of New Orleans, January, 1880, and it offers courses leading to the Bachelor of Arts or the Bachelor of Science degrees. It endeavors to prepare leaders and citizens in general, for wholesome participation in the "American Way of Life".  

The enrollment at Southern University according to the 1955-56 bulletin was 4,000. The library contains 71,151 books, plus 24,627 government documents and 588 periodicals and has 14 staff members employed full-time. The four professional librarians share in the supervision of all departments. There are two full-time employees in the circulation department, three in the catalog department, one in acquisitions, two in reference and one each in the periodicals and films department.

2Ibid., p. 48.
3Ibid.
Fifty-two student assistants are employed in the library. The largest number (22) work in the circulation department, 12 others are assigned in the reserve room, five in the catalog department, four in the acquisitions department and three each to reference, periodicals and films.

North Carolina College at Durham

North Carolina College at Durham is located in the city of Durham, North Carolina. It was accredited as a "B" Class institution by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1931, and as an "A" Class institution in 1937. It has also been approved by the Association of American Universities, and holds an "A" rating with the American Medical Association and the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction.¹

North Carolina College is a state-supported liberal arts institution. Its purpose has been the development in young men and women of fine character and sound academic training requisite for real service to the nation. Its enrollment according to the 1954-55 annual catalogue was 1,936 and the library contains 62,826 catalogued books and periodicals. According to the catalogue it now has a balanced collection of federal and state documents, pamphlets, maps and microfilms. This library currently received 615 magazines, and over 37 newspapers by subscription and gifts. There are

five professional librarians supervising the circulation, catalog, acquisitions, reference and periodicals departments. The full-time staff totals nine. There are five full-time staff members employed in the circulation department and four in the catalog department. Four part-time employees work in the circulation department and one in the catalog department. Fifteen student assistants are employed; nine in general circulation, two in the reserve room and four in the catalog department.¹

Bethune-Cookman College

Bethune-Cookman College is situated at Daytona Beach in Volusia County, Florida. In 1947, the College received an "A" rating by the State Department of Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. At one time Bethune-Cookman was a combination high school and junior college. In 1939 the high school department was discontinued and for two years it only operated as a junior college. In 1941 the college decided to expand its junior college program two more years thereby making it a four year college.²

The College aims to help students educate themselves through a program of personal self-activity. Enrollment according to the 1955-56 college bulletin was 817 and the

¹Ibid., p. 22.
library contains 24,118 volumes. Its staff consists of three professional librarians and four student assistants who are employed in the circulation department.

Dillard University

Dillard University is located on a 62 acre campus approximately two miles northeast of the business district of New Orleans. It is accredited as a class "A" institution by the State Board of Education of Louisiana and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. It is also accredited by the University Senate of the Methodist Church. Its nursing program is accredited by the National Nursing Accrediting Service and it is also a member of the Association of American Colleges. It operates on a four-year basis offering courses leading to the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science degrees.

The enrollment at Dillard according to the 1955-56 college catalog was 842. The library contains approximately 45,000 bound volumes and over 200 periodicals. The staff is composed of three professional librarians namely; the head librarian, who is in charge of acquisitions, reference and periodicals; the cataloger, and the circulation librarian. There are two full-time non-professional staff members; one

1Ibid.
3Ibid.
is employed in the circulation department the other is a secretary. Student assistants total 13; seven work in the general circulation and reserve department, four in the catalog department and one each in periodicals and the curriculum laboratory.

Johnson C. Smith University

Johnson C. Smith University is located in Charlotte, North Carolina. It is rated by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools as a Class "A" College. It is also a member of the Association of American Colleges, the American Council on Education, Council of Theological Education of the Presbyterian Church U. S. A., the Presbyterian College Union, and it is an associate member of the American Association of Theological Schools. The University was founded in 1867, and is operated under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. It is composed of a college of Liberal Arts, which confers the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science; and the School of Theology, which confers the degree of Bachelor of Divinity. It is operated on the principles of Christian faith in education for the ministry, teaching, and other walks of life.¹

The enrollment at Johnson C. Smith according to the 1954-55 bulletin was 708 and its library contains approximately

There are three professional librarians who share in the supervision of acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, reference and periodicals departments. There is also one part-time worker and four student assistants.

Summary

The six accredited colleges included in the study are:

(1) Florida A. & M. University which had 4,134 students for the year 1955-56, and its library contained 64,000 volumes. The library staff consisted of 12 members of which three professionals plus 26 student assistants who were employed in the circulation, acquisition, reference, periodicals and government documents departments. (2) Southern University which had an enrollment for the year 1955-56 of 4,000. Its library contained 71,151 books, plus 24,627 government documents and 588 periodicals. Fourteen staff members were employed including the four professional librarians who supervised the circulation, catalog, acquisitions, reference, periodicals and film departments. Fifty-two student assistants supplemented the full-time staff. (3) North Carolina College at Durham which had an enrollment in 1954-55 of 1,936. The library contained 62,826 books and periodicals, received 615 magazines and over 37 newspapers. The circulation, catalog, acquisitions, reference, and periodicals departments were supervised by five professional librarians and assisted by

\[1\text{Ibid.}\]
10 part-time employees. Fifteen student assistants also performed various duties in the library. (4) Bethune-Cookman College which in 1955-56 enrolled 817 students. The volumes in the library numbered 24,118 and the staff was composed of three professional librarians and four student assistants. (5) Dillard University in 1955-56 enrolled 842 students. The library contained approximately 45,000 volumes and over 200 periodicals. There were five staff members, three professional, two full-time non-professional members and 13 student assistants; and (6) Johnson C. Smith which had 708 students and its library contained approximately 26,650. The staff was composed of three professional librarians, one part-time worker and four student assistants.
CHAPTER III

SELECTION AND QUALIFICATIONS OF STUDENT ASSISTANTS

Selection

So many college students have found it necessary to help themselves financially and while there are some secure jobs off the campus, many students seek employment on the college campus.

In practically all college libraries a considerable amount of employment is given to student assistants. They perform numerous routine tasks such as desk duty in the library and in departmental reading rooms, shelving, filing and typing. When they are carefully selected and well trained and when they are not so numerous as to overwhelm the library staff with supervisory duties, student assistants can render a useful service to the library while helping themselves financially and educationally.\(^1\)

In order to employ efficient students for work in the library certain general methods of selection must be followed. Brown and Bousefield list the following suggestions which were compiled after an examination of the practices of many libraries:

1. Students should be selected as attendants solely because of their ability to perform the duties to be assigned.
2. The time and order of application should be ignored.

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(3) No promise of an appointment should be made in advance or before a student enters college.
(4) Recommendations should be ignored or largely discounted.
(5) Intelligence and scholarship ratings should be considered. No student should be allowed to continue his library work if he is failing in any subject or just managing to 'get by'. If a library course is given, the grade of a student in the course will be a guide.
(6) Appointments should be made only on a temporary basis during a period of probation. There should be no hesitancy in discontinuing the service of any attendant whose work does not measure up to a high standard.
(7) Preference in appointment should be given to qualified freshmen or sophomores who may continue in the employment of the library for three or four years. Students with experience are generally more valuable.
(8) Tests, such as those employed at the University of North Carolina, should be used to weed out the less desirable applicants. The test may be followed by a short but intensive instructional period.1

Cecil J. McHale states that this was one of the most elaborate systems for the selection of student attendants:

In this library students are never hired "sight unseen". Statements on application blanks, grades and amount of voluntary reading are used as a basis for the selection of students to take written examinations. The examination is in five parts and is based on knowledge of both library methods and books. Students who seem to be the best qualified are then given two tests - the filing of cards and the arrangement of books on the shelves. If students survive these ordeals - and apparently some do - their names are placed on a waiting list, but only after scholastic grades, intelligence ratings and other information available at the office of the dean of students have been obtained.2


This system seems justifiable in that if more time is given to selection less time will be spent in training students who might later prove inefficient. However, Mary V. Fisher made an inquiry, in 1953, of the University of North Carolina in order to know whether the same system of selecting student attendants by written examinations is still used. The reply indicated that the system had been changed and written examinations were no longer given to prospective student employees.\(^1\)

In many cases, Randall noted that the college librarian has no voice in selecting the students who are to work for him. Students are paid out of some college fund not controlled by the librarian and are chosen because of their economic need rather than for their aptitude. If the librarian has the authority to discharge the inefficient, he has control over the situation. He should never be forced to employ unsatisfactory assistants in any capacity; indeed, he should have the right to employ student assistants on a basis of their efficiency only.\(^2\) The final selection should be made, in most cases, by the individual under whom the student is to work.

In the selection of students for work in the library, the librarian or staff member in charge of student help must keep in mind these things: (1) the duties of each position to be filled; (2) the character of the work; (3) the amount of time required for doing

\(^{1}\)Fisher, op. cit., p. 15.

the work each week and the need for consecutive working time; (4) the minimum qualifications and special qualifications such as lettering ability or pre-service experience; (5) the personal qualities that seem desirable; and (6) the physical requirements.¹

Experiencing 12 years in the catalog department at the University of Houston, and dealing with freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior students, who were interested in working in the library Zelda Osborne made the following observation:

First, efficiency depends more on experience and the length of the training period than on academic rating. A freshman, after six months' training of twenty or more hours a week, is usually more satisfactory than a junior who has never before worked in a library. Second, in many instances students with only average scholastic records have proved more accurate and dependable than those with higher grades. Third, generally speaking, foreign students have a broader cultural background and are therefore more at home with European and classical literature and the arts than are those students educated in our public schools.²

This study shows that in all but one instance, the control of the appointment of student assistants is vested in the library. Florida A. & M. reported that the student assistants are selected by the immediate supervisor who makes recommendations to the Director of Student Employment. At Southern, student assistants are selected by a representative of the Financial Aid for Students' Committee. At North Carolina, the librarian works in cooperation with the student

¹Lyle, op. cit., p. 324.
employment counselor. At Bethune-Cookman and Dillard the
head of each library department selects and at Johnson C. Smith it is the librarian's responsibility.

Qualifications

Students interested in employment in the library must meet certain qualifications as set up by the university or library. Need, scholarship, and accuracy top most of the lists in studies that have been made. Packard stated that the students' need of financial assistance is a qualification most often set up by the college administration and that it is binding upon the librarian, particularly when the assistants must be drawn from a pool established by some administrative agency.¹

On scholarship Cecil McHale states that:

We have no place in the library for the failing student... on the other hand, merely because a student is on the honor roll is no guarantee that he will be a titanic success as a circulation assistant.²

Grace Oberheim, at the Iowa State College Library measured the success of student assistants by both a rating scale and promotion. This success was then correlated with scholastic grades, scores made on the American Council on Education Psychological Examination, and the Institute of Industrial Psychology Clerical Test. She found a definite correlation between promotion and high grades and scores on the

¹ Packard, op. cit., p. 11.
² McHale, op. cit., p. 379.
two examinations and stated that since the results show that
the mean difference between the group promoted and the group
not promoted are significant, high scores on the test used
and high grades may be considered to be of value as predictive
devices in the selection of student assistants for college li-
brary work.1 Mary Virginia Fisher found that accuracy stands
first on the list of essential qualifications in the opinion
of college librarians in North Carolina. Accuracy is impera-
tive in order to prevent inconvenience to readers and to ex-
pedite time in the library.

Personality is a very important trait and should be
mentioned here. Doris Goughlan states that a student assist-
ant must cope with wrong volumes, or none at all, mis-slipped
books, non-existent periodicals, aged alibis, and their in-
numberable ilk. They should be able to take in stride stu-
dents who rush in under a deadline with a fistful of call
slips and remark that they are in a hurry for a coke date.
The library assistants must not be color blind, as many people
remember books not by title, author, or number, but by color.2

The qualifications reported by the cooperating li-
braries in this study substantiate the qualifications which
top the list made in previous studies. Florida A. & M.

1 Grace M. Oberheim, "The Prediction of Success of
Student Assistants in College Library Work", Educational &

2 Doris S. Coughlan, "A Book By Any Other Number...",
University mentioned the following qualifications as pre-requisites for the employment of student assistants in the library: accuracy, interest in library work, general intelligence, ability to take responsibility, good health, ability to type, neatness, and ability to use the card catalog.

Southern University lists need and an average of "C". North Carolina College at Durham lists: ability, personal fitness, and need. Bethune-Cookman College considers previous experience in a library or office, scholastic attainment and need. Dillard University lists: capacity to do a given type of work, needs of the student financially, and their availability to fit into the overall schedule of the library. And finally, Johnson C. Smith University states that student assistants are selected from application sheets turned in to the business office.

**Summary**

Many college students seek employment in the library in order to help themselves financially and when students are carefully selected, well trained and are not too numerous, they can render useful service to themselves and the library. There are a variety of factors that condition the selection of students and the librarian who should have the power to employ students, should take into consideration the duties, the character of the work, the amount of time required to do the work, personal qualities and physical requirements.

In the present study student assistants are selected
by the librarian or the department heads. The qualifications which topped most of the librarians' lists in previous studies were: need, scholarship and accuracy. Those mentioned in the present study according to the frequency of mention were: need (mentioned three times), scholarship and intelligence (mentioned twice), and capacity, availability, experience, application, accuracy, interest, reliability, health, and personal fitness (mentioned once each).
CHAPTER IV

TRAINING, COMPENSATION AND DUTIES OF
STUDENT ASSISTANTS

Training

Students selected to work in the library are introduced to the work either formally or informally. Group instruction can be used effectively in libraries where a large number of students are employed. In small libraries where there are few student assistants, training can be given through individual instruction.

Wilson and Tauber state that since a high turnover exists among student assistants, it is important that their training be carefully organized so as to limit the instructional period. Staff manuals have been employed successfully for this purpose. Greater efficiency has been found to result from the practice of employing few persons for longer periods than from that of giving a large number of students only a few hours of work each week. To recruit from freshmen and sophomore classes when vacancies occur has also been found to be an effective way of building up a strong corps of student assistants for service over a reasonably long period of time.1

The methods of giving instructions vary but follow a general pattern:

1. A meeting of all new student assistants is scheduled at the opening of college at which time the librarian or staff supervisor of student help explains in detail the nature and responsibility of student work. Attention is given to such matters as these: the importance of accuracy, method, punctuality and courtesy in loan desk work; the rules and regulations of the library; the need for strict impartiality in serving student readers; the rules regarding substitutes when students are unable to work their schedule time; the limits to which students are permitted to go in helping readers; and the proper care and handling of library books and equipment.

2. Students are shown the location of various reading rooms and are given simple instructions in the use of the catalog and the classification system. The students may then be given a manual, with instructions that they will be given a brief test on the information contained in the manual when they return for practice work.

3. After students have been given general instruction in the use of the library and certain simple practice problems to acquaint them with library procedure, they are then usually introduced to the work of the particular departments in which they will serve. The supervisor of each department will introduce the students to the routines that will be expected of them in the department.

In this study the method of training has been through the use of the general staff manual and the departmental manual which is a guide for those employed in a specific department of the library. Another means of training is by constant supervision and daily oral instruction. And finally the lecture system is used. This is a method by which all of the assistants employed in the library meet at one time and are given instructions by department heads or by the librarian.

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1 Lyle, op. cit., p. 326.
Lectures are usually held several times during the school year. They should be well organized, brief and interesting. It is a good time to iron out difficulties that arise daily and also to commend the students on all accomplishments.

**TABLE 1**

**METHODS OF TRAINING STUDENT ASSISTANTS IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF SIX LIBRARIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Training</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
<th>Catalog</th>
<th>Acquisition</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Periodicals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General staff manual</td>
<td>1 1 ...</td>
<td>1 ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental manual</td>
<td>3 2 ...</td>
<td>2 ...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant supervision</td>
<td>6 4 2 3 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>4 5 1 2 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 1 the general staff manual is used at North Carolina College in the circulation, cataloging, and reference departments. Departmental manuals are used in the circulation departments at Florida A. & M. University, North Carolina College, and Dillard University; in the cataloging departments at North Carolina College and Dillard University, and in the reference departments at Florida A. & M. University and North Carolina College. All six libraries employ constant
supervision in the circulation department; Florida A. & M., Southern, North Carolina, and Dillard find it necessary in the cataloging department; in the acquisition and periodicals departments this method is employed at Florida A. & M. and Southern, and in the reference departments at Florida A. & M., Southern and North Carolina. Lectures are used at four of the colleges in the circulation department; namely, Florida, North Carolina, Bethune-Cookman and Dillard. They are used at five colleges in the cataloging department; namely, Florida, Southern, North Carolina, Bethune-Cookman and Dillard. North Carolina also gives classroom instruction during the first week of school. Lectures are also used in the acquisition and periodicals departments at Florida and in the reference departments of Florida and North Carolina.

Policies Regarding the Hours and Wages

Most librarians feel that the number of consecutive hours and the total number of hours per week a student assistant can work have a great deal to do with the value of his service to the library.\(^1\) Brown and Bousfield are of the opinion that better results will be obtained if no student is employed for less than 15 hours per week.\(^2\) In the light of the data revealed in the Modena Brown study of six eastern college libraries, this figure is higher than the student

\(^1\) Lyle, op. cit., p. 327.

\(^2\) Brown and Bousfield, op. cit., p.
working hours which were obtained in these libraries. Miss Brown discovered that the median number of hours worked weekly by student assistants in the selected group of college libraries ranged from 5.03 to 10 hours.1

In this study Florida A. & M. University reported that its students are allowed to work 11 hours in each of the following departments: circulation, reserve, catalog, acquisition, reference, periodicals, and government documents. Southern University allows 13 hours in the following departments: circulation, reserve, catalog, acquisitions, reference, periodicals and films. Ten hours were permitted in the circulation, reserve and catalog departments at North Carolina College. At Bethune-Cookman students work 14 hours in the circulation department. Dillard reported 10 hours in the circulation, reserve, catalog, acquisitions and periodicals departments and 14 hours in the curriculum laboratory. No report was given in this respect from Johnson C. Smith.

In regard to the wages of student assistants, the evidence seems to show that in most colleges there is a fixed wage rate.2 By adhering rigidly to a fixed wage, it is difficult to give superior students compensation for special merit or for work of a more responsible nature. Moreover, there is little incentive on the part of the student assistant

1Modena Brown, op. cit., p. 50.
2Randall, op. cit., p. 328.
for improvement in the discharge of his duties.¹ Brown and Bousfield state that the wages of student attendants in 1931 varied from 15 to 60 cents an hour, depending partly upon duties and partly upon the location of the college. Table 2 indicates the wages paid to the student assistants in the six colleges under consideration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleges</th>
<th>Wages per Hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>$ .56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>.35-.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethune-Cookman</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillard</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnson C. Smith</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 indicates that student assistants of the cooperating colleges are getting far less than the students were getting at the colleges studied by Brown and Bousfield in 1931. Not one of these colleges has reached the 60-cent hourly pay level.

The six cooperating libraries reported four different sources of funds for paying student assistants: Funds at Florida and North Carolina are appropriated by the state; Southern's funds come from an institutional appropriation; Bethune-Cookman's are a part of the library budget; and student assistants' funds at Dillard and Johnson C. Smith come

¹Ibid., p. 328.
from the general university budgets.

The libraries at Florida, Southern and North Carolina reported that the students are paid in cash. Bethune-Cookman's students are paid cash, or the money is applied on their tuition or board, depending on each individual employed. Dillard makes payment in cash only if all of the student's bills are paid in full; otherwise it is applied to any outstanding bills and Johnson C. Smith reported that the payment is applied to the student's board.

The office or factors determining the amount of money to be paid to students vary: Florida reported that the Office of Student Activities determines the amount; at Southern and Bethune-Cookman it is handled by the business office; North Carolina reported that the amount is based on the general wage scale of .55-.75 cents per hour and need and ability to do the job; Dillard reported that the business office decides upon the amount of money to be paid to students and this is determined by the kind of work involved. At Johnson C. Smith the amount of money to be paid to students is determined by the college administration.

Duties

The duties in the college library are numerous; they are assigned to student assistants by department heads or by the librarian. With thorough training and constant supervision these assigned responsibilities can add to the development or continuation of a good library. However, as Katherine Diehl has stated:
It is easy, so very easy, to expect too much of them. They are apt. They are eager to help. They enjoy one of the coveted working areas of the campus. They are secretaries, and tally clerks, and mail men, and binding assistants and dozens of other things. But they have no business in places of advisory capacity anywhere in the library.¹

On the other hand Young makes a wise observation that:

Whatever the work may be, the assistants should feel that they are doing a job worth doing. Here again there needs to be a demonstration of the assistants' job relation to the whole pattern of work. Too, the students, should feel that they are sharing in the rewards that come from giving satisfaction to patrons as well as rewards that come to them through their securing of knowledge that will be helpful to them through all of life.²

Paul Martineau³ had an interesting experience with student assistants when he went to Goddard College Library in Plainfield, Vermont and had the task of reorganizing the library. The library was in a chaotic condition and Martineau reports that he and three student assistants were able to put the library in almost perfect condition. The students worked diligently and took a hand in most of the tasks. For the two students who considered librarianship as a career there were special assignments in reading, cataloging, filing and other similar duties. Here Martineau expresses the point of view that Parker holds:

²A. Barbara Young, "Student Assistants", Library Journal, LXIII (January 15, 1938), p. 42.
All the staff of the library have an opportunity to impress and inspire by personal word and deed those students who work in the library as assistants. In this regard it seems as if more could be done with student assistants to capture and hold their youthful and impetuous enthusiasms. Have we given the promising student a proper chance to exercise his ingenuity by allowing him varied experience, opportunity for initiative, such as preparing exhibits or selecting books for purchase, or exercise of some responsibility perchance in regard to publicity? Or have we kept him attaching bookplates and pockets until the paste runs out of his ears and he runs out of the library for good? We can and must capitalize on this great and continuing source of librarian material.¹

All six of the libraries concerned in this study employ students to do miscellaneous typing, filing, answering the telephone, stamping library ownership in books, shelving, discharging returned books, checking periodicals received, putting up newspapers and placing magazines on files and racks. Five of the libraries employ students to paste pockets and date due slips, mark call numbers on spines of books, shellac books, mend torn margins, charge loans, slip cards in books upon return, count, arrange and file cards of the previous day's loans, check loan files for overdue books, help patrons to find information, pack newspapers, books and magazines for storage and open periodicals and alphabetize them for checking. Four of the libraries employ students to type booklists and orders, type notices, collate books, pamphlets and magazines, make special shelf labels or signs, mend torn...

print, remove jackets from new books, write fine notices and warn students in regard to books not returned before examination periods. Three of the libraries employ students to reinforce magazines and pamphlets, mount pictures, recase books, prepare slips for ordering Library of Congress cards, lay aside books which need mending and rebinding and check books needing new date due slips and cards. Two of the libraries employ students to copy bibliographies, clip and paste synopses in books, wrap books for mailing, pull from the card catalog and shelf list the cards for discarded books, collect and record fines, and post fine lists and keep it checked. One library employs students to mimeograph, process recordings, operate projectors, mail films, assist in assembling displays and exhibits, search the card catalog for duplicate copies in the library before ordering, and to type subject headings for catalog cards.

The evaluation of student assistants' work as reported by the six colleges concerned, is achieved by more than one method. Some of the librarians' responses did not indicate exactly how they go about evaluating, they merely mentioned the criteria used. The libraries of Florida A. & M. University and North Carolina College at Durham makes use of rating sheets. Southern evaluates the students' work by their performances but does not specify how. At Bethune-Cookman College students are given rating sheets by which they evaluate themselves. Dillard bases its evaluation on the student's punctuality, orderliness, caliber of work and resourcefulness.
At Johnson C. Smith supervisors evaluate the student's work.

Student assistants' organizations are formed in order to have all of the students employed in the library come together to get instructions, to discuss and solve problems and to socialize. Among the colleges in the study, only Southern University reported that there was a library organization which met spasmodically but had no set program.

Summary

Staff manuals, department manuals, constant supervision, and lectures have been employed in training students for work in the library. Whatever method is used, the training should be carefully organized in order to limit the instructional period.

In the present study constant supervision is the method used most frequently. It is used in the circulation department of all six libraries, in the catalog department of four libraries, in the reference department of three libraries and in the acquisitions and periodicals departments of two libraries. Lectures ranked second, being used in the catalog department of five libraries, the circulation department of four libraries, the reference department of two libraries and the acquisitions and periodicals departments of one library. The use of the general staff manual is unpopular in these college libraries, and it was used in the circulation, catalog and reference department of only one library.

The number of consecutive hours and the total hours
per week a student assistant can work are factors which will greatly influence the general operation of the library. In the study done by Modena Brown, the median number of hours worked weekly by student assistants ranged from 5.03 to 10 hours. In the present study the students at Florida A. & M. worked 11 hours, Southern permitted 13 hours, North Carolina College at Durham permitted 10 hours, Bethune-Cookman 14, and Dillard 10 hours.

The wages at Florida A. & M. University were 56 cents per hour, Southern's ranged from 35 to 50 cents per hour, Fifty-five cents is paid at North Carolina, 26 cents at Bethune-Cookman and Johnson C. Smith, and 35 cents at Dillard. These figures are less than the range of 15 to 60 cents per hour that some colleges were paying in 1931.

The funds for the students employed in the libraries concerned are from four different sources: (1) appropriation by the state, (2) institutional appropriation, (3) the library budget and (4) the general university budget. Three of the libraries reported that the students are paid in cash, one reported that students are paid in cash, or the money is applied on their tuition or board, another reported cash only if all of the student's bills are paid in full, and one reported that the payment is applied to the student's board. The office or factors which determine the amount to be paid

\[1\] Modena Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
to assistants were: the office of student activities, the college administration, the business office, the institution's general wage scale for students, and one college determines the wages according to the student's needs and ability.

Student assistants perform numerous varieties of duties in the library and they should always be made to feel that they are a very important part of the program. They should be assigned duties with a variety of experiences which may offer opportunities for the stimulation of initiative. Of the six libraries studied only two of them seem to offer work to students which is above the general level of routine activity, such as mimeographing, copying bibliographies, clipping and pasting synopses in books and collecting and recording fines.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was concerned with the selection, training and duties of student assistants in six accredited Negro colleges. Three of these institutions are privately supported and three are state supported. The privately supported institutions accommodate far less students than the state colleges and their library materials collections are correspondingly less. The larger state colleges have larger library staffs and many more student assistants but both types have about the same number of professional librarians (from three to five). The librarians concerned seem constantly to supervise their student assistants and very little attention is given to any type of formal training.

The student assistants work from 10 to 14 hours per week and the pay ranges from a low of 26 cents per hour (in two colleges) to a high of 56 cents. The wages are allocated by state or institutional appropriations in three cases, and the library's budget in one case, and the general university budget in the other two cases, and the amount that is paid is determined by the college administration, the personnel office or the business office. Monetary credit is in most cases applied to the student's bills but if bills are all paid,
students receive the cash. Most of the duties of student assistants consist of general routine work. In only two of the colleges were students found to be engaged in some of the more skilled and challenging jobs such as copying bibliographies, pulling from the card catalog and shelf list the cards for discarded books, and assisting in assembling displays and exhibits.

Rating sheets for purposes of evaluating the work of students are used in two libraries and the other indicated that the caliber of work is determined by general observation.

Only one library of the six concerned reported having an organization of student assistants.

In view of the above findings the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Since all six of the institutions are accredited it would seem that attention might be given to the provision of more professional librarians, especially in the larger state supported colleges in order that a higher caliber of service may be rendered to students and faculties. (The larger colleges employ far more student assistants than the smaller ones do, but they require a great deal more supervisory time from the relatively few professional librarians).

2. Since the training of student assistants is for the most part a matter of day to day informal guidance which consumes a great deal of time it would seem more economical and fruitful if plans could be formulated to involve some type of well-planned group training which would eliminate the
need of step by step instruction for each student. Through an organization of student assistants a great deal of generalized instruction could be incorporated; and many problems which face the students could be discussed and probably solved.

3. Since most of the students work from 10 to 14 hours per week attention should be given to the relatively low rates of pay which are prevailing. Costs for college education are increasing and the current pay scales are as low as they were in other colleges in the 1930's. The library cannot possibly hope to attract high caliber students with such low pay scales if other more lucrative jobs are available on the campus or in the surrounding community.

4. Even though it may require more bookkeeping by the college it would seem far more beneficial to the student if he were paid in cash for his work and then required, in turn, to pay his own school bills. A great deal of psychic value is to be gained by the college youth by actually seeing and handling money that he has earned and it is a rich educational experience for him to pay his bills personally. (After all the college should be interested in the total development of a student).

5. Since the colleges seem somewhat dependent upon student assistant labor and since they do not have enough professional help, the idea of upgrading the quality of work that students engage in should be very seriously considered. As a student indicated that he is capable of performing more
skilled and technical work he should be assigned to such. This would not only help the library a great deal but the chances are that some students may be inspired to go into the library profession because of his enriching and challenging college experiences as a student library assistant.

6. More attention should be given to evaluating the work of student assistants and written records should be kept of the same. These records are valuable for upgrading and promotions and are necessary in many instances for reference purposes when the student seeks future employment. This is especially true if a student applies for a governmental job.
APPENDIX A

LETTER TO LIBRARIANS

As a partial requirement for a degree in Library Service at Atlanta University I propose to write a thesis concerning the selection, training and duties of student library assistants in six Negro colleges.

I would be very appreciative if you, with the assistance of your staff, would complete one of the enclosed questionnaires and return it to me by April 30th in the self addressed stamped envelope provided. The other enclosed questionnaire is for your files.

Thanking you for your cooperation, I am

Respectfully yours,

(Mrs.) Gwendolyn L. Walker

Enc.
A Study of Student Assistants in a Selected Group of Negro Colleges: Their Selection, Training and Duties

1. What is the source of funds for student assistants' wages?

2. How are student assistants paid (cash, tuition, board, etc.)?

3. What office or factors determine the amount of money to be paid to students?

4. Who selects your student assistants?

5. What criteria are used for selecting student assistants?

6. How do you evaluate student assistants' work?

7. Do you have a student assistants' organization? If yes, how often does it meet? What kind of program does it have?
8. Following is a list of possible activities of student assistants. Please check those in which your students are engaged.

- Doing miscellaneous typing
- Typing booklists and orders
- Typing notices
- Copying bibliographies
- Mimeographing
- Filing
- Answering telephone
- Collating books, pamphlets and magazines
- Stamping library ownership in books
- Pasting pockets and date due slips
- Marking call numbers on spines of books
- Shellacing books
- Re-inforcing magazines
- Re-inforcing pamphlets
- Mounting pictures
- Making special shelf labels or signs
- Mending torn margins
- Mending torn print
- Recasing
- Preparing slips for ordering L. C. cards
- Removing jackets from new books
- Clipping synopses and placing in books
- Shelving books in stacks
- Processing recordings
- Operating projectors
Mailing films
Assisting in assembling displays and exhibits
Searching the card catalog for duplicate copies in the library before ordering cards
Typing subject headings for catalog cards
Typing analytical cards
Shelving books in various departments
Wrapping books for mail
Pulling from the card catalog and shelf list the cards for discarded books
Charging loans
Discharging of returned books
Slipping
Counting, arranging and filing of the previous day's loans
Laying aside books needing mending and rebinding
Checking books needing new date due slips and cards
Collecting and recording of fines
Making up the fine list and rewriting it when needed to keep it neat and up-to-date
Checking loans for overdue books
Writing fine notices
Warning students in regard to books not returned before examination periods
Helping patrons to find information
Packing newspapers, books and magazines for storage
Opening periodicals and alphabetizing for checking
Checking periodicals received
Putting up newspapers
Placing magazines on files and racks
9. Please give information about the administration of your library by checking or filling in the appropriate spaces below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Staff</th>
<th>Student Assistants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional in Charge</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor has also other responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Full-time Staff Employed</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. Part-time Staff Employed</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. Employed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under Prof. Supervision at all Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. Hours Work Per Wk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wages - Hourly, Weekly</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Semester</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Please indicate below your methods of training student assistants by checking the appropriate spaces below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Training</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
<th>Cataloging</th>
<th>Acquisitions</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Periodicals</th>
<th>Others write in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General staff manual</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dept. manual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student assist. manual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant supervision</td>
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<td>Others write in</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles


College and University Publications


Unpublished Material


