

SECTION THREE

ACCOMMODATION AND SPACE

If a school library is to be effective, it needs its own space in the school. No matter how small the space may be, the library should have full use of it at all times. If space is shared, the programme of work planned for the library will have to be continually adjusted to fit in with other activities. Sharing space may also lead to conflict and disagreement among those who have to share.

Where should the library be? Since the library is for all to use, and to use freely and often, it should be close to the heart of the school and easy to reach. If it is hidden away, or not within convenient reach, many users will not bother to go. Teachers will be reluctant to send pupils there to find information. Many pupils, and even staff, may forget that it exists. If access to it is difficult - perhaps through a room where teaching is taking place - many users will be prevented from going to use it.

To summarise, though each school must consider its own circumstances, two points are particularly important if a school library is to be effective. First, it must be central. Second, it must be where everyone can visit it easily and conveniently.

Space in the Library

What space is needed? Three kinds of activity should be provided for.

The first is for a class or a group of children to come

to the library for their studies. This does not mean that the library is simply another classroom. But because some class work or group work is best carried out with the help of library material, it should be possible for a group of pupils to come to the library and use its stock, either in the library itself or in an adjoining room. The amount of space for this will depend on the largest number of children who are likely to come at one time.

Secondly, there must be space for individual pupils to come and study. Careful planning will be needed to ensure that any group work or class work going on in the library does not interfere with this second need.

The third use is for children to come and read for pleasure outside teaching times. A friendly, relaxed and comfortable atmosphere and arrangement is needed to encourage this kind of use.

Remember that, besides the tables and chairs needed for reading and writing, space will also be needed for making use of audio-visual equipment in the library. Provided the library room is large enough, careful planning of its layout and furnishing will enable the various kinds of use to be kept separate. If it is not, an adjoining room will suffice if it can be made available. Space will also be needed for the librarian's work and materials, for the catalogue and for displays.

Ideally 8% of the teaching space of the school should be allocated to library use, with a minimum of 40 square metres (440 square feet). It should allow for use by 10% of the pupils at a time, and space should be allowed at the rate of 3 square metres (32 square feet) per pupil in the library.

There are many schools, even in developed countries, which do not yet make provision at this level. What, then, should they do? If a start is made with the space that can be spared, increasing use and demand will demonstrate the value of additional accommodation. If a specially constructed room is not available, a converted classroom may suffice. Even other kinds of space, such as former corridors or cloakrooms, can be used.

The key factors are:

1. Shelter from climatic effects (rain and direct sun).
2. Reasonable security for the library's materials.
3. Sufficient space for the books and other materials to be housed and made available for selection.

Do not be discouraged by an immediate belief that no space can be found. With sufficient will and co-operation among the staff, a solution can nearly always be reached.