

The Biology Library

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During the last few years most schools have taken more than usual interest in their libraries. More money has been included in the budget for new books and for other reading matter. In many progressive schools the library is the real center of activity in the school, as it is the source as well as the clearing house for the solution of many of the intellectual problems of students. The central library has been called the "Heart" of the school because from it lead the many avenues which open unto a new world for many students. The central library is the clearing house for all of the books used in a school. Here the books are catalogued and made available to those who seek more than just the minimum required. Books in this library are selected from lists submitted by the teachers in addition to those selected by the librarian. In an arrangement like this the science books, especially those in the natural sciences, are selected by persons who are better acquainted with the needs of the students and consequently books are selected which are used by the students. Most librarians select science books after they have consulted with the science teachers and here again useful books are selected.

In our high school a problem arose which if it had not been remedied would have worked a hardship on the students. Our library, even though quite large, could not accommodate all students who wished to go there for reference work during their study periods. In order to give the biology students all available opportunity to do as much reading and reference work as they had time for, we established what we call "A Branch Li-

brary" in the biology department. Biology has a branch library, Chemistry and Physics have one also. When a teacher begins a unit of work he goes to the central library and selects all available books which will be of value and these are brought to the room for the students to use in addition to those general references kept in the classroom the year around. A student librarian, who is a member of the library club, looks after the branch library, which may be in a room next to the biology classroom or a separate space set aside in the room as a library section. Chairs and tables are at the disposal of the students. Instead of taking reference books to their desks they go to the library section or to the library room adjacent to the classroom to do their reading. Students can draw out any of the books, but only over night. When a student finds that he wants to get additional information in addition to that given in the basic text he is permitted to go to the library section or library room, and there finds all available material on a given topic that the school has. On certain topics there is also available other material in the central library, as only the more important references are to be found in the branch library.

In selecting the books for biology, care has been taken not to overload in any one branch of biology, but to get suitable books in the various fields. It is in this way that one can have a nucleus for a good biology library, and one which can be built up according to the funds available. There are at present not very many books written especially for high school students, but if a teacher uses care and foresight a good number of reference

books which deal with the materials of biology can be made available to the students. High school textbooks in biology are the most common books one finds in most biology classrooms or libraries. These may serve their purpose, but from experience I have found that the better students do not find them complete enough to meet their needs. If one is to encourage reading in the natural science field we will have to offer something more than high school texts. College texts in most cases are valuable as reference material, but today we have a few so-called "popularized" presentations of materials of biology and also books written on biological material for the "laymen." This type of book seems to be popular with the students and the ones most used. In addition to the books many teachers have many pamphlets which are secured from a number of sources.

In order to encourage students to do more reading, especially in biology, we have asked the students to read each week one article from a magazine and one article in a newspaper—each to be on some phase of biology or of a biological nature. We call this assignment, "Biology in the Press." Each student is given a five by three card on which he writes the following information: Name of magazine, date, name of article read and length of article, either in pages or inches; name of newspaper, date, name of article read and length in inches. On the other side of the card the student writes what interested him most in each of the two articles read. In this way the student is brought in contact with the latest developments in biology as they appear in the press. After this plan was introduced we found that the magazines in the central library were in constant use and many students could not read the magazine they desired. To solve this problem the administration orders special copies

of the most used magazines and places them in the branch or classroom library, where students can read, either before or after school, or during class period when they have time.

Our little reading program has created more genuine interest in biology and more than doubled our use of reference books. The extensive use of reference books is partly due to the fact that the students want additional information to help them better understand some of the things read in the press. Another significant point is that the little reading in the press has opened many new avenues for investigation in the field of natural sciences for these young people. It has been a great help to demonstrate to the student that biology plays a major rôle not only in his every day living, but in the world as a whole. As a result of this reading we now have quite a number of students carrying out various experiments. At present the work on soil-less plant culture is most popular. If all biology teachers will just take a little time to organize and develop a biology library, the boys and girls will come in contact with the better reading material and the young people will leave school with a broader understanding of the marvels of the living world, which can not be gained if they have only a basic text.

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