

# The Happy Medium in Library Instruction at the College Level

By ANNIE MAY ALSTON

IN AN EFFORT to avoid the extremes of no library instruction for college students and the required library course for all students, library instruction has fallen in our institution—a liberal arts, church-related college with student enrollment of 1,000—at a midway point between these two extremes.

In an earlier self-examination of our library instructional program for students, we had reached the following conclusions about our offerings:

1. A freshman does not need to know in one hour what librarians have learned in one or more years of library school.

2. A freshman does not need to know specialized reference tools of which his own instructor may be unaware.

3. The guided library tour is the lowest form of instruction.

4. The copying by twenty-five students of problems solved by four students has no real educational value.

5. Our sophomores, juniors, and seniors are the forgotten students in systematic library instruction.

Our current program has been built around the concept that the library does have something for every student and there is a time in the academic life of the student when he will accept this fact.

## FOR THE FRESHMEN

All freshmen, through their English classes (thirteen sections with an average of thirty students to the section this year), come to the library for one hour of library instruction near the beginning of the fall semester. During this hour a series of slides is shown and a real effort is made to avoid crowding in detailed information for which the student has

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no immediate use. In this first series slides are shown which illustrate (1) every aspect of the physical plant (a brief explanation is made of the various activities carried on in each area); (2) arrangement of library materials; (3) library policies and regulations (although the library handbook contains this information, the slides do a better job at this point); (4) sets of catalog cards; (5) citations from *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*.

During the second semester the freshmen come back through their English classes for another hour of library instruction before beginning their term paper. A second series of slides is shown including (1) detailed instruction on the card catalog; (2) Library of Congress subject headings; (3) additional information on *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*; (4) information on *International Index*; (5) periodical files; (6) *Essay and General Literature Index*.

## FOR THE SOPHOMORES

In the second year, through the humanities classes, a one-hour lecture on general reference books, with accompanying bibliography, is given to all sophomores. Specialized reference tools are omitted from this instruction. Appearing on this bibliography are unabridged dictionaries, adult encyclopedias, biographical tools, atlases, *Statistical Abstract*, *World Almanac*, *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, *Granger's Index to Poetry*

and Recitations, and the "Oxford Companions." An additional sheet of citations from *Essay and General Literature Index*, *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, *International Index*, *Education Index*, and *Public Affairs Information Service* is distributed to students.

#### FOR THE JUNIORS AND SENIORS

During the fall semester a one-hour meeting is held with majors on the junior and senior level by departments of instruction. Faculty members in the department attend these meetings and make valuable comments on library resources. Meetings are held with the following departments: art, Bible and religion, biology, business and economics, education and psychology, English, home economics, music, social science, and speech. The chemistry department has its own course in chemical literature but follows the bibliographical guide pre-

pared by the library. These meetings with the majors in different departments have the following objectives: (1) to teach students the *approach* to the specialized reference books in their major field; (2) to acquaint students with *types* of reference books in their area of specialization; and (3) to insure the fact that students know *authorities* and some of their contributions to their major field of study.

In this discussion on specialized reference tools the college library comes near fulfilling its mission of bringing teachers, librarians, and students together in a true spirit of learning from books.

All of the above sessions are initiated by the library but do meet with the full cooperation of the teaching staff. In addition to these classes, the library continues to welcome special invitations from faculty members for library instruction to groups throughout the year.

## LC Publishes Monumental Guide

A monumental bibliographical *Guide to the Study of the United States of America* has just been published by the Library of Congress. Compiled by Donald H. Mugridge, Blanche P. McCrum, and other members of the Library's staff under the direction of Roy P. Basler, Director of the Reference Department, the volume describes in its more than 1,100 double-column pages approximately 10,000 books "that reflect the development of life and thought in the United States."

The *Guide* has 32 chapters, each taking in the various aspects of a single broad subject. The most comprehensive—the work of Miss McCrum—is on "Literature," which includes about a third of the nearly 6,500 entries. Other fields receiving extensive treatment include "Literary History and Criticism," "Periodicals and Journalism," "General History," "Diplomatic History and Foreign Relations," "Local History," "Travel and Travelers," "Society," "Art and Architecture," "Music," "Law and Justice," "Constitution and Government," and "Politics, Parties, Elections." An appendix furnishes a list of books useful for those studying American civilization in its broad aspects, and there is a detailed index for locating information in the text.

Copies of the *Guide to the Study of the United States of America* may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., for \$7.00 each.