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PRIMARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY 1975:
PROVISION IN RELATION TO SCHOOLS
COMMISSION POLICY AND PLANNING

BY

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ABSTRACT

The basic purpose of this study is to analyse in general terms Schools Commission policy and planning in regard to the development of library resources and services for Australian primary schools in both the government and non-government education systems. The core of the study is a survey of the provision and needs of primary school libraries in the Australian Capital Territory, based on the Schools Commission *Guidelines for library services in primary schools*. The survey is not an end in itself, but is a means of appraisal of the school libraries program of the Australian government as viewed at the grass roots level in one particular area.

The report falls into two sections. Section I is an introductory section which gives firstly an overview of the work of the Federal government in the development of school libraries and services between 1968 and 1975. The introductory section also analyses the development of the Schools Commission guideline standards for primary school libraries, and explains the role of the standards in relation to both the 'needs' criterion of the Commission's educational program and the equitable distribution of government funds. The standards are not absolutes in terms of precise structural specifications to be applied in all circumstances, but rather an affirmation of possibility in relation to a given ambit.

It is in Section II that the data from the survey of the primary school libraries in the Australian Capital Territory is analysed, and some comparisons are made with the Monash University study of provision and needs in primary school libraries carried out in 1975. The objectives of the ACT survey are not, however, oriented simply to a factual statement of provision and needs, but also to highlighting the intrinsic and recurring administrative problems associated with the provision of library resources services in schools. Issues raised by the survey relate to differentiated staffing patterns, obsolescence of materials, centralised versus decentralised collections, tolerable loss rate for books, custodial attitudes of teacher-librarians, teacher attitudes to the library, production and use of audiovisual materials by teachers and students, community use of school libraries, identification of needs by individual schools, availability of central support services for selection and processing of materials, funding for resource provision.

In regard to conclusions the report does not attempt to offer anything but tentative suggestions, because of the range of variables in most cases, which could not be eliminated or controlled in a survey of this type. However, some factors do emerge which could be the basis for more detailed analysis, such as the nature of obsolescence in regard to school library materials, and the relationship between types of library

service and the 'open' or traditional' structure of the school program. There is one factor which the survey does show quite clearly, namely the gap that exists between policy decisions taken at the national level and the implementation of that policy at the local level.

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