

# Nursing Libraries in Hospitals and Libraries in Schools of Nursing

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A library with a stock that is well chosen and which is organized and administered with care, is a vitally necessary part of the nurse training school. Without a library, the curriculum of the nursing school cannot be fully implemented, and the student cannot obtain the maximum benefit from what she learns in ward and classroom. Of the many ways of learning, it is from her own wider reading on her subjects, that the student ultimately gains most.

Education is a continuous process, and books are as indispensable to that process as is straw to the making of bricks.

A library, therefore, should be considered as something more than a collection of textbooks. A wide choice of books, supplemented by reference books, should be provided, which will give the student a breadth of outlook not obtainable from the textbook.

The library should be a centre of educational activity, available at all times for reading and reference. It is part of the educational obligation of the training school to provide not only books for study, but, of equal importance, suitable accommodation in which to house them. A library should be the centre of the intellectual life of a training school, available at all times for reference, for study, or for private reading. It should be quiet and comfortable, an environment which encourages reading and study. Last, but not by any means least, it must be easily accessible.

A library, properly stocked and properly used by both teacher and student, is an educational instrument of incalculable value, for it should provide not only all the material necessary for the fullest development of the curriculum (books, pamphlets, periodicals and

visual aids) and cover nursing in its widest extent, but it should also contain books for related general reading, that will stimulate and enrich the mind.

A library must never be static; the stock should be continually under review; new books and new editions must be added, and redundant copies withdrawn.



Miss Alice M.C. Thompson

Once the library is established, an adequate annual sum for maintenance should be set aside, and provision should be made in the annual training school budget for the supply of relevant new books and periodicals.

The provision of a centrally situated, quiet, comfortable room for reading as well as books from which to study, does not, however, for educational purposes, constitute a library. The material in the library must be organized in such a way that the greatest possible use may be made of it, and the maximum information obtained from it. It is of the greatest importance that a library, however small, should, from the beginning, be properly recorded, classified and catalogued. If it is allowed to develop without this being done, the library can only be effective to a very limited extent.

## The Objectives of a Nursing School Library

The chief objectives of a nursing school library are four :—

(i) To provide material which will aid the student nurse in the study of her subject, and extend in breadth and depth, her knowledge and understanding of it.

(ii) To organize the material in such a way that the greatest use may be made of it, and the maximum benefit obtained from it.

(iii) To foster the habit of study, and to inculcate proper use of books.

(iv) To provide the nursing staff with books for their continuing education, and for reading in their particular field.

## Administration

The responsible authority for the administration of the library should be the education committee of the school of nursing, when one exists. But it is of paramount importance that the principal tutor be given responsibility for the maintenance of the book stock, and for the day-to-day administration which is concerned with hours of opening, methods of issue and library rules.

Since the library should be open for the maximum number of hours, and since it may not always be possible for a tutor to be present, it follows that students may from time to time be responsible, not only for recording for themselves the books that they have borrowed, but for the general good conduct of the library.

We are indebted to Miss Thompson who so readily responded to our request for an article on the organisation and management of hospital and school libraries.

We believe that this article will prove a useful guide to those in charge of such libraries.

Next month we plan to publish a list of books recommended by the Indian Nursing Council.

EDITOR

The formation of a small library committee of students could do much to foster an interest in the library. That privilege in responsibility is indisputable, but the converse is equally true, and if students are given a certain responsibility in the running of the library, and are also able to suggest the addition of particular books to the stock and improvements in the administration of the library, much benefit should accrue to both students and library.

### Organization

Since the tutor will be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the library, it is *she* who will also be responsible for its organization. For this to be effective, a knowledge of the simpler methods of record keeping and of library techniques is essential.

### Records.

#### *Accession Register.*

Of the records of library stock that must be kept, the "accession" register is the most important. This provides a chronological record of all the books that the library has ever owned. It shows how many and which books were purchased during any one period, and also what they cost—of particular value when preparing the library budget. "Accession" registers may be purchased from suppliers of library equipment, and are already ruled into columns under the following headings :—

- (i) Accession number
- (ii) Author
- (iii) Title and edition
- (iv) Publisher
- (v) Price
- (vi) Date of receipt
- (vii) The final column is used when a book is withdrawn from stock. The entry is deleted from the register, and the word "withdrawn" and the date entered in the column.

A plain ledger would serve equally well—ruled in the columns as given above.

#### *Shelf Register.*

This is a card file record of the books in the library arranged in the order of the books on the shelves. It has two main functions :—

- (i) It shows how many copies of a book the library owns, since a card is made out for every copy of every title that is in the library.
- (ii) It is used as a check when stock-taking, since it is at once apparent if any books are missing.

Whenever a book is withdrawn from stock, its card must be extracted from the shelf register.

### Recording Books on Loan

Since it is important to be able to trace quickly books that are on loan, some method of recording issues must be used. There are several ways of doing this, from the simple ledger entry, to a system of slips which are filed in triplicate.

For a library with a comparatively small issue, a satisfactory method is to use book cards which are filed under the date on which books are due to be returned. These book cards are usually made in a size 5 inches by 3 inches. The cards can be inserted in a pocket inside the cover of each book, or kept in an alphabetical file under authors' names. The name of the author and a brief title of the book appear at the top of each card.

When a book is issued, the card is extracted from the book or the card file, and the borrower enters her name and the date on the card. A date label should be pasted lightly in each book, the date on which the book is due for return being stamped on the label each time the book is issued. The book card is filed under the same date. An "overdue" guide card should be inserted in front of the date guide on which books become overdue. This "overdue" guide must be moved forward each day. Standard issue trays may be purchased from library equipment firms.

A ledger ruled up under date of issue, borrower's name, author and title of book and date due for return, may be used for recording issues, but, for obvious reasons, is less satisfactory than the first method described.

### Classification

Classification and cataloguing are two distinct processes, but they are so closely linked that the

second must be regarded as the complement of the first.

Classification is the method of arranging books on the shelves so that like goes with like, and the subjects under which books are grouped follow one another in a logical order.

When selecting a scheme of classification, the main point to consider is that, since the growth of a library is inevitable, the scheme must be one that covers related general subjects as well as the specialities of nursing and medicine.

When classifying, it should be remembered that a book can go in only one place on the shelves. A cataloguer, on the other hand, need not concern herself with the main topic, since she can make as many entries as are needed in the catalogue, and may index a work under as many headings as are necessary. For example, a book on chest surgery may be classified under surgery, but the cataloguer will also make a subject entry in the section on diseases of the chest.

### Cataloguing

The main functions of a catalogue are two :—

- (i) To show what books a library has by a particular author (the author catalogue).
- (ii) To show what books a library has on a particular subject (the subject catalogue).

A card catalogue is the best arrangement for a small library, although other forms of catalogue may be used.

In the "author" catalogue, cards are arranged alphabetically under authors' names. In the "subject" catalogue, cards are arranged in a classified order of subjects, the cards being in alphabetical order of authors' names within each subject.

An additional function of cataloguing is that a book dealing with several subjects, or several aspects of the same subject, can be analysed by placing an entry in the subject catalogue under each of these subjects.

### Book Selection and Book Stock

Each subject in the curriculum must be adequately represented on the shelves, but there should be no

great duplication of titles. Text-books which students should themselves possess should not be bought in any quantity for the library.

The library stock should be maintained on a proper balance between the various subjects studied. Before purchasing a book which is likely to be of only limited use, consideration should be given to the possibility of borrowing it, when required, from other sources, such as neighbouring medical libraries or the local public library.

Book selection should be made with the future usefulness of a book in mind. Out of date editions should be replaced by the most recent as soon as possible. Book reviews in nursing and medical periodicals and lists issued by publishers of medical books, should be checked regularly for new books and new editions, and personal visits to bookshops should be made whenever possible.

It is of the greatest importance that the tutor be given complete responsibility for the maintenance of stock. She must be free to make her own choice of books, and free to buy when necessary. It is not a good system that requires a committee decision before books can be purchased.

Periodicals are a vital source of current information and experimentation, and the attention of the student should be drawn to all articles of interest. Since all nursing journals do not issue an index, and such as are published of necessity appear several months after the volume has been completed, a simple card index of all important articles should be compiled in the library. Whenever possible, the nursing journals should be kept in a permanent file, the volumes being bound for preference.

It is important that a collection of reference books should be avail-

## Fifty Years Ago

**W** E Indian nurses unite with her friends the world over in congratulating Miss Florence Nightingale, O.M., although somewhat tardily, on reaching her ninetieth birthday. It occurred on the 12th of May, and she was the

recipient of the following telegram from the King :—

"On the occasion of your ninetieth birthday I offer you my heartfelt congratulation, and trust that you are in good health.  
—George R. & I."

able, including a good encyclopaedia and medical, nursing and other dictionaries.

### Finance

As mentioned above, a sufficient sum should be allocated to the library in the annual training school budget.

The library budget must be soundly worked out, allowing for the purchase of new books, new editions, periodical subscriptions and binding. The budget can best be estimated by a comparison with previous expenditure, due allowance being made for the progressive increase in the price of books and periodicals. When allocating the budget, the proportions of 75% for books, 15% for periodicals and 10% for binding are a good basis on which to work.

### Accommodation

Frequently the accommodation available for the library is inadequate. Where new schools of nursing are planned, space for the library and room for its expansion should be an important consideration, and particular care should be given to its siting, planning and equipment. Much can be done with existing accommodation, and whether planning new premises or adapting old, it might be helpful to ask advice from a professional librarian, who would be able to make suggestions on the arrangement and equipment of the library for the greatest

efficiency.

The library should be accessible, and should therefore be situated near the classrooms. The library should be in as quiet a position as is compatible with accessibility. There should be adequate space for books, tables and chairs, catalogue cabinets and periodical racks.

When considering the size of the library, space should be allowed for a reasonable number of staff and students to use the library at one time. Eighteen square feet of floor space, which includes table and gangway space, is an average allowance per reader. Shelf space should allow for expansion. Standard library shelving, of wood or metal, should be used wherever possible. This is made in stacks 6½ by 3 feet. When estimating the amount of shelving required, it is useful to remember that 6-7 books occupy one foot of shelving.

Lighting is important, and there should be as much window space as possible. Artificial lighting should be uniform and free from shadows. Table lamps should be provided.

These, then, are essential for a good library : a carefully selected and maintained book stock, which is effectively organized, supported by an adequate grant and housed in a centrally situated, quiet, pleasant room with suitable heating, lighting and ventilation.

A good nurse must be—

Punctual to a second and orderly to a hair.

—Florence Nightingale