reports on important changes taking place at the College

"The important point is that at this stage of specialization the best place to start may be from the inside, working through the study of a single field."
THE NEW CLIMATE OF LEARNING

BOOKS SUCH AS C. P. Snow's The Two Cultures have given vividness to the problem of specialization, and the difficulties of bridging the vast gulfs separating the cultural world of the sciences and of the humanities. But the action of Columbia College in the past two years suggests, at least in terms of the American scene, that one is dealing with something more complex than two sharply demarcated cultures.

THE DIFFICULTIES of specialization encountered today, compared with forty years ago, are not of the College's making; they spring from the mind of man and from his accelerated capacity to acquire new information about himself and his universe at a rate faster than his capacity to assimilate it. He has certainly been acquiring it at a rate that is faster than his ability or his desire to communicate it to those outside the field of his specialty.

THE WAY TO START getting conversations going between separate cultural worlds is not to ask the mathematics department to teach Mathematics for Idiots, as some have irreverently described the task of teaching college mathematics to non-mathematicians. It is to ask the physicist to begin to devote himself to the problem of communicating with those in allied fields, with other natural scientists, the zoologist and the chemist; to ask the historian to communicate more with the sociologist and the economist.

THE NEW PROPOSALS [of Columbia College] represent a new effort to build more effective bridges between the increasingly specialized components of knowledge in the arts and sciences.

THE EXPERIMENT IN CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION

"The department of anthropology, for example, is no longer expected to contribute instructors to teach excerpts from the writings of Freud, Keynes, Malinowski, Veblen, and more than fifty others. It is asked to teach anthropology as a course in general education."

THE FACULTY VOTED to suspend for three years as a required course for everyone the second year course in Contemporary Civilization, "CCB". This interdepartmental course examined, by means of original works of social science and social philosophy, the central problems of man and his relation to society in the modern world. It carried forward to the present the first year course, "CCA", which dealt with the historical evolution of the ideas and institutions of western civilization through the 19th century. For the next three years CCB will still be offered, but only as one among a number of options open to students as a way of satisfying the requirement of a second year's study in Contemporary Civilization.

The faculty left the future open after the three-year period. CCB may be reinstated as a single required course for everyone, or retained as an option, or it may be dropped altogether. Meanwhile, the College is out to discover whether there are other ways of pursuing its objectives of general education.

In CCB, members of the participating departments were confronted with a common body of materials drawn from their own field, and from fields outside their own—including economics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and government. In these circumstances an instructor in economics, for example, tended to feel, on the one hand, that he was not equipped to do justice to the materials of sociology and anthropology and, on the other, that the students were not equipped to examine intelligently the materials drawn from his own field. They could not, for example, properly understand what Keynes was saying without the foundation of a previous course in economic theory.

The difficulty was analogous to that already encountered by the College in trying to design one inclusive general education course in the natural sciences—although it was less obvious and perhaps less acute in CCB. The fact that the subject matter of the social sciences seemed more familiar to the general student, and that the language was more often the English of everyday life, obscured the fact that the words of the social scientist were frequently words of art, the processes of analysis intricate, and the underlying techniques highly specialized.

The faculty therefore approved the proposed new approach. During the trial period of the next three years... the department of anthropology, for example, is no longer expected to contribute instructors to teach excerpts from the writings of Freud, Keynes, Malinowski, Veblen, and more than fifty others. It is asked to teach anthropology as a course in general education, building upon the foundation of CCA, providing at the same time an introduction to the discipline of anthropology, and then, by means of that discipline, casting light on central problems confronting contemporary civilization.

THE COLLEGE RECOGNIZED... that the replacement of a single course by a group of electives involved paying a price. It meant that not all Columbia College students would have read a common body of materials on the twentieth century before graduation. Not all students would have had at least a brief encounter with selections from some of the major works in the social sciences on the nature of man in contemporary society.

If the range was to be narrower, the depth would in compensation be greater. The student in his second year of Contemporary Civilization will be launched on a study of contemporary society which he will continue for the rest of his life. He will learn how one of the social sciences studies men in the twentieth century.
NEW FLEXIBILITY IN THE SCIENCES

"They cannot be successfully forced down the throats of those with capacities and interests lying elsewhere."

Hence, students were required to take one year in science in two of the three categories into which the sciences had been grouped. The first category was mathematics; the second was physics, chemistry and astronomy; the third was zoology, geology, botany, and psychology.

The faculty concluded that the system of separate categories had proved inflexible and unwieldy in operation and had led to frequent student requests for exceptions, many of them reasonable. Students wanted to take two courses in the same category—physics and chemistry, botany and zoology, for example—or they wanted to take two years in one science rather than in two separate sciences. The faculty felt that the division of the sciences into these three exclusive categories had become somewhat arbitrary in view of the present nature of the sciences and the demanding nature of all of the science courses at Columbia. Therefore they voted to eliminate the categories, thus permitting a student to satisfy the requirements by one full-year course in each of any two sciences or by two full-year courses in any one science. The elimination of these categories, however, may have side effects which the College will want to re-examine in the next few years, after observing the trend of course registrations.

Under the new system, students will not be required to take one year either in mathematics or the "quantitative sciences"—physics, chemistry and astronomy. The faculty felt a more basic introduction to these subjects should be supplied in school and measured at the stage of admission, and that while college level courses are desirable, they cannot be successfully forced down the throats of those with capacities and interests lying elsewhere. This group of students might, nevertheless, derive real benefit and satisfaction from a study of a field of science of their own choosing.

The effects of this liberalization will be watched, however. If it results in a large-scale movement of non-science majors away from physics and mathematics, the College may want to reconsider its action."
A HARD LOOK AT THE HUMANITIES

"The time had come to conduct a review of the general education courses in the humanities."

FEW HAVE QUESTIONED the continuing importance of the two-year general education sequence in the humanities, introducing all students to a selected group of the great works of literature, read in their entirety, in the first year, and to great works of art and music in the second ... The fact that the continuation of the two-year required sequence in humanities is accepted does not mean that the College may not want to raise some questions about it and its relationship to the evolving College program.

... ... ...

THE SECOND YEAR COURSES in humanities, FB1 and MB1, are distinct from most of the other general education courses in that while they are taught like the others in small discussion sections, they are staffed entirely by the respective departments - Art History and Music. This necessarily imposes a substantial burden of staffing on the two departments. Last year the [College's] Committee on Instruction held a number of discussions with the art history department about the staffing of the course, the optimum size of the sections, the demands on the student, the relationship of FB1 to subsequent, more intensive appreciation courses in painting, sculpture, and architecture, as well as to departmental offerings in art history.

The Committee on Instruction concluded that the time had come to conduct a review of the general education courses in the humanities in the light of the evolving College program. A special committee will be appointed this year.

Lending particular point to the timeliness of such a review is the prospective erection of the Columbia University Arts Center building. The College should consider the potential significance of the new center and its program in the arts for the College curriculum. The Arts Center cannot be dismissed simply as a place for the training of future professionals in "applied art," music, drama, and architecture. It will in fact be a center of artistic education, as the Lincoln Center will be a center of artistic performance.