



ABC'S OF CITY LEARNING

BY JOHN BREMER

Sophists and scientists, politicians and philosophers, have always been fascinated by "phenomena"—that is, by the visible, by what shows. In their various ways, with their various purposes, they have set out to save the appearances, to explain them, or explain them away. It could not be otherwise, for the appearances, what everybody sees, are what we have in common. And on occasion we become a community through the acceptance of a set of appearances (usually of ourselves) presented by a national leader. In the classical age Pericles portrayed Athens in such a way that the Athenians could bring into being the city they heard described by accepting his account of themselves as one within their achievement.

The rhetorical problem that Pericles (and any such teacher) faced is delicate, intricate, and universal. It is universal because it must include *all* in the creation of unity, intricate because the vision held up to every-

one must offer a place to each individual, delicate because the gap between the vision and the previously experienced reality must be bridgeable by the citizens (so they do not charge the visionary with cynicism), yet bridgeable only through their effort and toil (to provide the satisfaction that comes from accomplishment and growth). Pericles offers an invisible Athens to ennoble the visible Athens; Plato, more ambitiously, offers the invisible

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Ivan Chermayeff found that even airport baggage routers did not know the symbols for every airport in his poster. Designed in association with Yellow Pages, the posters were done by well-known designers who donated their services. The National Endowment for the Arts and Champion Paper absorbed printing and paper costs.

Yellow Pages of Learning Resources

Resources Directory
Area Code 800

In keeping with the notion that learning is not confined to the classroom, Yellow Pages is an invitation to discover the city as a learning resource. The directory was produced by the Group for Environmental Education and supported by Educational Facilities Laboratories and MIT Press.

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one item, like paper, and when to add a competitor? How are prices determined? How much profit does a store make? What expenses does the hardware store have? What is its overhead? If possible, compare the hardware store with a hardware department of a large department store in terms of stock, costs, and profits.

HINGES
SCREEN CORNER BRACES
SCREEN AND STORM HANGERS
WASHERS

47 HOSPITAL 41

What can you learn about a HELICOPTER?

The boy had an urge to fly in a helicopter so with money in pocket, he went to the airport where the rent a copter firm was located.

The lowest charge was \$95 per hour.

Exceedingly, he befriended a helicopter pilot who at least allowed him to sit in a whirlybird while they talked. What the pilot told him was almost as exciting as the ride would have been.

"Hours old babies who are premature or otherwise in danger of permanent health damage are now isolated into our supermodern world with a flight to a hospital's intensive care nursery. Inexpensively, new high-rise buildings in many cities are equipped with a helipad on the roof. And passengers flying into airports can hop a helicopter and be taken right into town without losing time traveling on crowded highways."

"Cops and copters have linked up in a program called Sky Knight, which involves patrolling Lakewood, California, by air. Many merchants participate in the program, installing alarm lights on roofs, which are visible to the helicopter for three to four miles in daylight and at greater distances in darkness. In the first year of the project, more crimes dropped by 8 percent."

The boy asked about the origins of the first commercial helicopter.

"A handful of pioneers began using the whirlybird in agricultural flying in 1947," the pilot told him. "By 1950, 328 helicopters were in the skies of the United States and Canada. By 1971, their total had soared to 3,874. Nonetheless, helicopters will not be parked in everyone's driveway, for they are tough to handle and tough to maintain and are expected to remain in the worlds of business and government."

"Have we learned anything as a result of the massive use of helicopters in Korea and Vietnam?" the boy wondered aloud.

"Yes," the pilot replied. "Successful evacuation of battlefield casualties during those wars prompted the use of helicopters for removing the injured from highway accidents and as a replacement for ground ambulances. Today about 275 hospitals in the United States have helipads."

What can you learn at a HOSPITAL?

Inside the walls of any large hospital you will find miniatures of a dozen different kinds of businesses operating in the outside world. Many hospitals are so self-sufficient that if a blackout occurs, as happened along the Eastern Seaboard in 1965, they are even capable of generating their own electricity.

As in any business, the problems of meeting expenses and collecting money exist. Like a hotel, the hospital is concerned with room and board, but these problems are on a much larger and more crucial scale. Housekeeping and laundry, which may seem to be casual maintenance jobs in the outside world, are vital to an institution that requires sterile conditions.

Hospitals vary. Some are proprietary hospitals owned by a group of doctors. Most hospitals are voluntary to some degree, which means that they take in a percentage of poor patients. Others are municipal, caring mainly for indigents, though Medicare may be having an effect on those hospitals. Veterans Administration hospitals, which treat men and women with service-connected problems, make up the balance.

Apart from proprietary hospitals, most hospitals are non-profit institutions and welcome volunteers. Volunteer work provides an invaluable opportunity to receive firsthand information on the operations of a hospital. These jobs include working as a Candy Stripper on the

"What if I get several friends to share the rental cost of \$95 an hour?" The boy started to figure.

"Forget it," was the advice. "Around the Northeast that's the rental for a bubble-top Bell 47G, which accommodates two passengers and the pilot. The larger J model holds three passengers and a pilot and rents for \$135 an hour. Top rental is for a jet-powered Bell Jet Ranger carrying four passengers and a pilot at \$200 an hour."

"Why don't you contact the Vertical Lift Aircraft Council of the Aerospace Industries of America, 1725 De Sales Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. In addition to having a lot of information on helicopters, pilots, and copters, they may know someone who gives free rides to boys and girls?"

"What are some other uses?" the boy asked.

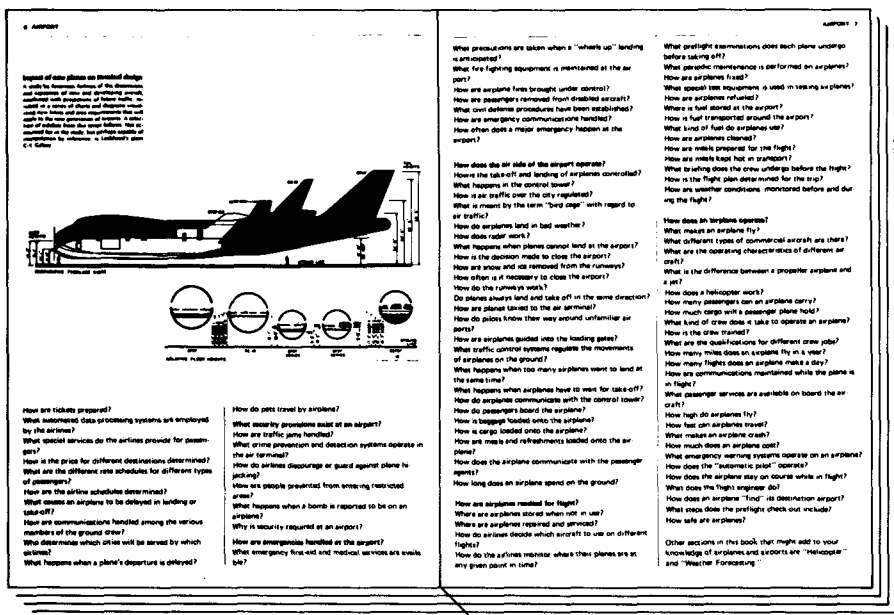
"Certainly you are aware of the airborne traffic reporters who describe traffic conditions to pilots," the pilot mentioned. "And the use of whirlybirds in construction work is also growing—for hauling materials to construction sites or to building tops. For example, around Christmas some helicopters are hired to transport Christmas trees to building tops. Also, as Christmas some thoroughbred Santa Clauses arrive by helicopter in the parking lots of suburban stores."

"Suppose I want to take lessons," said the boy.

"Typical costs in the Northeast states run from \$50 to \$70 on up to \$100 an hour depending on craft size," the pilot replied. "And that fee continues for a minimum of 40 flying hours."

"Incidentally," he said the boy, "it was a woman who made the first solo helicopter flight over country from California to southern New Jersey."





commitment to the ideal notion of a city both as a philosophic vision and as a dedication to community. As students often see it, this struggle is one between "fitting into the system" (with its restrictive demands and relatively sure rewards of some money and status) and participating in the creation of a new kind of society (a process that is exciting but also dangerous).

Yellow Pages of Learning Resources was prepared under the editorship of Richard Saul Wurman (The MIT Press, 94 pp., paperback \$1.95) in connection with the International Design Conference on the theme "The Invisible City" held in Aspen, Colorado, in June. "This book is concerned with the potential of the city as a place for learning," Wurman writes in the introduction:

Education has been thought of as taking place mainly within the confines of the classroom. . . . However, the most extensive facility imaginable for learning is our urban environment. It is a classroom without walls . . . offering a boundless curriculum with unlimited expertise. If we can make our urban environment comprehensible and observable, we will have created classrooms with endless windows on the world.

Discovery of the city is facilitated by a catalogue of seventy alphabetically arranged categories made up of: people (twenty-eight entries, ranging from butcher to psychologist); places (twenty-nine entries, from city hall to zoo); and processes (thirteen entries from candymaking to weather forecasting). For each entry there are some descriptive statements, suggestions of how to explore the particular resource, a series of questions, and sometimes a personal report.

For anyone who has not used the city as campus and curriculum, the

The key to learning is to ask the right questions. But how many? Yellow Pages suggests ninety-eight questions one might ask an airport administrator.

Yellow Pages will provide support, but it will readily be outgrown (as it should be) by anyone with enough determination and interest to begin and continue for more than a brief time. In short, it is a fine *primer*, leading to the writing of one's own catalogue of resources perhaps, but, more importantly, to using the city as an expanding resource.

The central problem that "schools without walls" pose for all of us is the relation of knowledge to action, of education to politics. If, through new modes of education, the invisible, private city is made visible—genuinely visible—to the young, they will not leave it unchanged. The educational process will then be seen as an interaction, in which the city and the student come to terms with each other, each by changing in some measure to accommodate the other. The *Yellow Pages*, with charming naïveté, plays with dynamite in its "Guidelines for Group Learning":

An investigation will tend to be more successful if it involves action, not only study. If you are learning about air pollution, learn who the polluters are. It is far more satisfying to plan an action that might involve reporting an offender. . . .

The innocence of this statement could be disastrous. It is only rarely that changes are brought about by the identification of a lone offender. To encourage the notion that one accomplishes social and economic changes in much the same way as one solves arithmetic problems in a workbook is to do

disservice to the idea that the young have a creative contribution to make to the improvement of city life. The political and communications skills necessary for real change take a long time to acquire. If action is encouraged in students, they should be provided with an opportunity to acquire the indispensable tools for effective action.

Yellow Pages does nothing further to encourage action than make interesting recommendations for exploration. It seems to assume that the city (like the school) is a place to which you come for information. You ask questions and record the answers, and the whole affair is cut and dried. There is no uncertainty, no doubt, no complexity in the *Yellow Pages*—and one is left with the impression that such people as hotel managers, carpenters, and ward leaders are delighted to be cross-examined at any time (although a union boss should be interviewed "during his lunch hour or after work").

There is also danger that *Yellow Pages* will be seen as a new curriculum guide; a lot of creativity will be needed to prevent it from being treated as just another syllabus to be worked through. For a teacher in a school particularly, additional problems emerge in preparing the city to receive students (which must be done) and in handling the simple, logistical difficulties (such as timetables) that never arise inside a school because they are all solved before a student ever enters the building.

The *Yellow Pages* is a new venture and should be valuable to many of us, for its vices as well as for its virtues. The authors cannot reasonably have been expected to make definitive statements about the visible and invisible cities, about the public and the private, and about how students could or should affect their cities, but they can be held responsible for the view of learning they promote. The main limitation of this view is that it puts the student in the role of a visitor, of an outsider, of an observer, with isolated or sporadic occasions for learning, which is achieved by rather aggressive and unimaginative questioning.

To know that "a good carpenter can drive a 6d [sixpenny] nail with three strokes" is not to know what the carpenter knows. There is a great difference between knowing about carpentering and knowing carpentering, just as there is a great difference between knowing about how to live and knowing how to live. To know about something is to be its observer; what is needed, surely, is for the student to be a participant. There must be a continuity between the life of the city and the life of the student-citizen. How to bring that about, given the complexity of the city and its "invisibility," we seem not to know. □

CONFRONTATIONS LONG AGO— THE STUDENT LEADERS LOOK BACK

BY GEORGE H. STRAUSS

Only two short years ago—it seems more like two decades now—high schools across the country were in turmoil. Students were protesting for a variety of reforms and causes—ending the war in Vietnam, obtaining student rights in the schools, eliminating poverty and racism, improving our physical environment.

During the 1969/70 school year, while doing research for my doctoral dissertation on student activism, I got to know the leaders of the student protest movements in the New York City schools. I recently spoke with four of them about their political activity of two years ago, their second thoughts on what they accomplished—or failed to accomplish—and their personal development since graduating from high school.

Participating in the interview-discussion with me were Donald Reeves, Arthur Schwartz, Julie Simon, and Robert Reiss. All of them were outstanding student leaders two years ago. They represent, to me at least, many of the human complexities and contrasts of the high school Protest Generation of the Sixties.

Donald Reeves is Jamaican-American, black, and tall. He recently published a book about his high school experiences, *Notes of a Processed Brother*. Two years ago Don was president of the New York City General Organization Council, a group of elected student representatives, and head of the High School Student Rights Coalition. His name was mentioned in the newspapers a good deal at that time. This fall he will be a junior at Cornell University.

Arthur Schwartz, a self-confessed organization man of two years ago, was then high school coordinator for the Vietnam Moratorium. He was also vice president of the G. O. Council and one of the drafters of a high school student bill of rights. After graduating from Bronx High School of Science, he

moved away from involvement in political organizations until last spring, when he participated in sit-ins at Columbia University. He will be a junior at Columbia this fall.

Julie Simon is an activist with a sense of humor. Her ebullience is enough to charm away one's thoughts about the aftermath of revolution, when the winners settle accounts with the losers. Two years ago Julie was an outstanding speaker at antiwar rallies for the Student Mobilization Committee (SMC) to End the War in Vietnam. She is still actively speaking out against the war, while attending Barnard College.

Robert Reiss is awaiting trial for refusing to register for the draft. I have seen his face somewhere in a Delacroix painting of French revolutionaries, those hunted, haunted young men who were willing to die for their ideals. I met Robert in the spring of 1970 at an SMC convention. He was in the lobby much of the time handing out literature and talking to people individually rather than inside the hall with the speakers and the organizers.

These four young activists exhibit both a critical openness and a sense of certainty about their basic values that I find refreshing. I think that they have much to say to us about the bureaucratic world we all inhabit and particularly about that most sensitive—and insensitive—of bureaucracies, the school system, and its proudest institution, the high school.

STRAUSS: What do you feel was accomplished by your activities two years ago? Have the results lasted or did they, in fact, melt away when you graduated?

SIMON: I'm still involved in the Student Mobilization Committee, and at every single meeting that I go to there's always a point on the agenda about high school rights or the high school struggle or whatever. The meetings are much like they used to be. There are different people giving the reports now, but they're saying basically the same thing.

The students today are still fighting for the very real, very concrete things that we were asking for.

SCHWARTZ: The basics of what we were talking about are still extremely valid; there's no vain illusion in hoping for a just society. But it was how we went about trying to reach that goal that became the main thing, even though perhaps at that time it didn't seem to be the main thing.

Julie and I disagree strongly on that. She's still at the Student Mobilization Committee, which does exactly the same kind of thing it did two years ago. Since then I've turned more passive and find absolutely nothing in mass movements. I want to get involved on a much deeper intellectual level, instead of just having a convention and calling for a rally and creating these artificial things—like we have to work toward "April 22." What does that mean? You'd have another day in Central Park, where there would be a lot of people.

REEVES: I don't think we made any substantive change in the system at all. We did change a couple of minds, and a couple of students were influenced or their parents became more aware. But in terms of achieving the goals that we set out to achieve—to make things better in the schools or to change programs—I don't think we had the power to effect those changes. We were engaged in a confrontation, and we lost. We were repressed, and that was the end of it. I wouldn't think that what we did was a futile thing. It's something that should have been continued. It's just unfortunate that the people who at the time happened to be leading the struggles—Arthur, Julie, and others—graduated. It is really up to those students who are there now to realize the importance, not of what we were doing, but of their situation, and to work from that point. SIMON: I disagree completely. Now when high school students in New York City public high schools continue to fight for their rights, they can go to court, and they can win. And they've done it! When we first started going to court, we couldn't win because we didn't have enough legal precedent on our side. But the high school students in New York won some very important cases after we left, on the basis of the bill of rights that we got the Board of Education to agree on.

George H. Strauss has taught political science at City College and is completing a book called *The Protest Generation: Political Disenchantment and Activism Among American High School Students*.