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DULUTH. . . UMD Lab Schoolers have a more than passing acquaintance with the world of books. It's no wonder when their librarian knows each of their 230 names, personalities, interests and reading levels.

Mrs. Lorraine Bissonett's remarkable feat, an up-to-the-minute library program, a roomful of books and eager youngsters spell a happy combination as any visitor to the library might see.

(BOX: Parents and the public are invited to visit the UMD Laboratory School Library on the Old Campus during National Library Week. Special displays of new books and story hours for primary-aged children are planned by the children's Library Club.)

An impressive physical outlay for a single room library -- 6,500 volumes, 28 periodicals and five sets of encyclopedias -- serves students from kindergarten through the eighth grade at UMD.

But a roomful of books is all but useless without a program, a person and a purpose.

The program is a busy one. Coordinated through the University Laboratory School, it calls for two library periods a week for each class, special story hours for primary grades, provision of accelerated reading material for gifted children and extra patience and help for slow readers, book reports, library training including the Dewey Decimal system and card cataloging beginning in the fourth grade, and a turn for each child as "librarian's assistant."

The person behind the program is "Lorrie" Bissonett, mother of four, whose purpose is to inspire a love of reading both in and out of the library.

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From conferences with teachers and parents she prescribes books for each primary grade child coming to library "class." The books are waiting for these children when they take their places at library tables. By keeping up with their study units, she helps older Lab Schoolers select references when they take their turn in the library.

When she notices a slow reader or time waster, she devotes extra time, asks the child to stop in at lunch hour, or after school. Gifted students are encouraged to read books at the adult level. Several of her eighth graders are tackling "Exodus" and "The Ugly American." She keeps all students aware of award-winning books so that they can tell a quality book from a mediocre one.

Mrs. Bissonett keeps up with a foot or two of book catalogues in order to update her current selections. She tries to read each book that comes into the library, often during the evening hours at home.

Her busy schedule is lightened by the Laboratory School Library Club, a group of fourth-through-eighth graders who learned library procedure well enough to take over for Mrs. Bissonett during an illness last year. The students are trained to help select books for classes, process new books for the shelves and mend old ones, tell stories in primary classes and help stage the annual Book Fair.

As the UMD children's library is the only service library of its kind in the Duluth Public Grade Schools, Mrs. Bissonett finds herself part-time consultant for other teachers and parents, and adults who want a new start in reading.

For these she prescribes going back and enjoying some of the children's books "missed" along the way. There's nothing embarrassing about getting a fresh start, she believes.