
Leopards on the Move: School Libraries in Europe

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The purpose of this paper is to give a general and up-to-date overview of the situation of school libraries and the school librarianship in Europe, focussing particularly but not exclusively, on those countries currently forming the European Union. The report is based mainly on existing literature, but also on information gathered from library organisation and association representatives and from their websites. Some case histories, best practices and projects are reported, organized according to the school library elements presented in the IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto.

Introduction

Countries in Europe are looking to gain better positions in the international framework of the labour market, trying to become more attractive and competitive places for working and doing business successfully. The European Union has been trying to encourage this change, especially since the Lisbon Summit in 2000, setting up inclusive and active policies (Commission of the European Communities, 2008) in order to compete in a globalised world (ISTAG, 2006). The European Union comprises 27 countries, while the Council of Europe includes 47 countries (see map at http://www.coe.int/T/I/Com/A_proposito_Coe/Stati-membri/). An increasing number of Europeans move within Europe; as well, people from many countries, mainly from North Africa, Middle and Far East, move to Europe to search for better conditions of living and working.

The purpose of this paper is to give a general and up-to-date overview of the situation of school libraries and the school librarianship in Europe, mainly based both on existing literature, and on information personally gathered from school library organisation and association representatives or, when that was not possible, through their websites. Some case histories, best practices and projects will be reported later in this paper, organized according to the school library elements presented in the IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto. This paper is a revised and updated version of a report published earlier on E-LIS (Marquardt, 2008).

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The leopard, an animal found over a great number of countries, from Northern Africa to Eastern Asia that “varies greatly in size and markings” (“Leopard,” 2010), is a metaphor for the school libraries in Europe. There are libraries in most schools in Europe, but there is a wide range of quality in services and activities, a wide range of problems such as the lack of funding and of formal recognition, and a wide range of interesting strengths and practices. However, like the leopard, the school library situation in Europe is on the move, definitely faster than ever, and it is changing in many different ways. Like getting a photo of a leopard, getting a picture of school libraries in Europe is difficult. One of the reasons for this difficulty is the challenge of defining Europe: apart from being a geographical continent, it may also be defined as the countries currently forming the European Union which does not, however, represent all European countries.

Schools and School Libraries in Europe

Education is a key human right. School instruction should provide all individuals with a good preparation for their personal, cultural and professional development, and the school library should implement the curriculum and foster students’ individual learning processes. Diversity is characteristic of European countries: along with substantially common roots is found a variety of languages, cultures, history, and traditions (for a detailed treatment of the new idea of Europe, see Chabod, 1965). School legislation also varies from country to country in Europe.

UNESCO has recently underlined how important information literacy is as the basis of knowledge societies “where the power of information and communication helps people access the knowledge they need to improve their daily lives and achieve their full potential” (UNESCO, 2008). The school library has an important role to play in the field of information literacy and media education, as the UNESCO/IFLA School Library Manifesto and Guidelines state and as research consistently shows (see, for example, <http://www.iasl-online.org/advocacy/make-a-difference.html>).

In order to discuss issues about information literacy and the school library/librarian’s role and to develop a European vision for these, a group of representatives of school teachers’ and librarians’ associations and institutions gathered in Amsterdam, in March 2003, with representation from eight European countries (Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Sweden and the United Kingdom). The group formulated and adopted the Amsterdam Statement on School Libraries and Information Literacy:

International research shows that the quality of students’ learning outcomes is greatly enhanced by effective school libraries. All learners in each country of Europe are entitled to quality school library/media centres and services. In order to achieve this, each country in Europe, and the European Union, should adopt and implement the principles of the IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto. (ENSIL, 2003, <http://www.ensil-online.org>)

The basic underpinning concept of the Amsterdam Statement is that learning opportunities must be equally given to all learners throughout Europe, and the school librarian/information specialist must be properly educated and trained at an academic level (for instance, in post-graduate or master’s level courses). Qualified school library staff is a

fundamental prerequisite of providing the effective programs, which should be offered to the learning community by the school library/media centre.

Fuegi and Jennings (2004) note that “gathering consistent information about the part played by libraries in developing the information resources within Europe is a difficult process and involves overcoming a number of practical problems” (p. 8), and it is definitely not an easy task to draw an up-to-date and complete picture of the current situation of school libraries in Europe. This is due to the lack of information at the national/regional level and at the central level - for instance, in the database implemented by Eurydice, “an institutional network for gathering, monitoring, processing and circulating reliable and readily comparable information on education systems and policies throughout Europe” (<http://www.eurydice.org/portal/page/portal/Eurydice/AboutEurydice>).

In general, schools in European countries are not asked to produce data and evidence about their school library services. Furthermore, there may be some data on a country in a specific period of time and no more data in the following years for the same country. For example, Luis Miguel Cencerrado, Coordinator of the Centro de Documentación e Investigación de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez in Salamanca (Spain), says that it is difficult to give a picture of the school libraries of his country because “those few data available don’t enable us to draw an update overview of these services (Cencerrado, 1999, tr. by author). Data are not collected in a systematic and standardised way: using existing data is often not possible because there is “no survey or sampling of school libraries in many countries” (Fuegi & Jennings, 2004, p. 8). This problem emerged in the Libecon project (<http://www.libecon.org/>), a research study into international library economics, which uses Internet communications to develop a continuously updated database of library activities and associated costs in the context of their national economies. The LibEcon project has been funded by the European Commission DG Information Society within the 5th Framework Programme for Research (www.cordis.lu/ist/ka3/digicult/home.html).

The Conceptual Framework of School Libraries

An effective lifelong learning attitude and dimension should be acquired right from the early years of life, during childhood. In order to successfully live in a complex and transitional society, an individual has to acquire and develop fundamental life skills. He/she should learn “to know, to do, to live together, with the others, and to be” (Delors, n.d.). From this perspective, information literacy is both a right and a crucial life skill (UNESCO, 2008). It can be effectively acquired through the stimulating learning environment and resources of the school library, through a challenging inquiry process which engages the student in the active construction of knowledge (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2007).

The library/librarian’s role in information literacy education in schools has been well explored and is well recognized. Information literacy competency standards and guidelines have been developed by many library associations. There is sound evidence from Europe as well as from around the world about the standards listed below; however, the way of meeting these standards may differ very much according to the specific legislation or tradition of each country. The generally agreed-upon standards for school libraries include:

- A school librarian/information specialist, professionally trained, can give a meaningful contribution to the school curriculum design, its implementation and enhancement.
- A school library/media centre can be an effective learning environment, when some elements are well combined (qualified and trained staff, up-to-date and stimulating collections, suitable equipment and welcoming and functional spaces), within a pedagogical and cultural framework.
- The collaboration between the teaching and the library staff is a crucial factor in fostering the student's learning process and enhancing his/her learning outcomes.
- The collaboration between the school library and the public/children's library is another important factor in improving learning and reading skills and in offering a wide range of traditional and digital resources.

Before going on, the definition of the term "school libraries" should be considered. The LibEcon Study defines "school libraries" as

Libraries attached to all types of schools and colleges below the third [tertiary] level of education whose primary function is to serve the pupils and teachers of such a school. It may also serve the general public. This includes libraries and resource collections in all educational institutions below the third level which may be described as "Colleges", "Colleges of further education", "Vocational Institutes", etc. (Fuegi & Jennings, 2004, p. 98)

The general term "school library" also includes "school library/media centre," "school documentation and information centre," "learning environment," "learning resource centre," "multimedia library," and so on, according to the different ways, in the different parts of Europe, of defining a library which belongs to and serves a nursery/primary/secondary school. However, it is known that:

We have many names for the things we love, as does the school library of today. The array of names may seem confusing, but the variety is best interpreted as reflecting new ways of doing things, different emphasis and aspiration towards reform in its entirety. What is more essential than the naming is what the school library is like and what happens there. (Frantsi, Kolu, & Salminen, 2002, p. 4)

Another ambiguous term is "school librarian," the qualified information professional who is responsible for the library services within a school and for their development and educational use: "Information manager, information literacy proponent, knowledge advocate—also known as the school librarian" (Clyde, 2002, p. 28). In some countries, the school librarian may be a "teacher/librarian," that is, a person with both teaching and library qualifications, or a "documentalist" (information specialist), usually a teacher with a specialization in information and documentation science.

The following sections are arranged according to the main points of the IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto in order to offer some information and reflections about each strategic aspect of the school library: mission; funding and legislation; goals of the school library; and staff.

1 Mission

The school library has a specific educational mission, within a broad context:

The school library offers learning services, books and resources that enable all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media. School libraries link to the wider library and information network in accord with the principles in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto. (IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto, 2006)

The research on the educational role of the school library and its impact on students' learning outcomes (see, for example, Williams, Wavell, & Coles, 2001, or the OELMA Study <http://www.oelma.org/OhioResearchStudy.htm>) presents good reasons for establishing and developing a school library as a vibrant heart of the school community. Nevertheless, the school library mission has often declined, and in European countries (or within the same country) the school library mission can range from a more traditional role, as a simple support to teaching and reading activities, to a more advanced and dynamic concept (for instance, as in the Spiral Curriculum, in Germany).

In European countries, the school library programme is often focused on reading promotion, rather than on information literacy education. This represents the challenge and the new frontier for the school library's mission in Europe. The educational mission of the school library and its cutting edge role in information literacy education has become more apparent in some national projects as, for instance, in Sweden (Barrett, 2007).

Spaces and equipment, of course, reflect this new information literacy education concept: different learning and teaching styles must find an adequate environment and resources in a library designed for learning. In many countries in Europe, there is an increasing attention to well-being at school in order to stimulate and motivate students and to prevent early leavers. School libraries also are often involved in this process of school innovation: their space needs to be "rethought" to fully meet the school community needs (Hoerr, 2007; La Marca, 2007; Ofstad, 2007). When properly redesigned, both theoretically and physically, school library facilities reflect the pedagogical and methodological criteria which put the learner at the very heart of the teaching of his/her own learning process; the renewed spaces attract students, make them feel comfortable and more confident and provide them with a vibrant environment for an effective information literacy education, as the Kalsbeek College experience shows (Boelens, 2008).

2 Funding, Legislation and Networks

Specific legislation and policies are needed to support the school library as a vital factor in lifelong learning. Nevertheless, it is not possible to find a specific guideline or recommendation in this field issued by the European Union. Across Europe, school libraries may be funded or helped by local authorities: e.g., City Councils assist school libraries in Norway; in Denmark "in connection with the Folkeskole (national primary school system), the municipalities must provide a long list of offerings, such as school libraries" (Denmark, Indenrigs-og Sundhedsministeriet, 2002), or at national level as in France. More often school libraries are funded by the school itself: where it is up to the school to prepare and earmark a specific budget

for the school library services, the principal usually plays a crucial role in fostering the school library. For instance, in Italy, due to the Act which established school self-government, a school may invest in its library much, little or not at all. Even when school libraries are established by law, the principal has a great influence on their development and integration into the school curriculum. Regular and adequate funding is a great concern for school librarians: it may also happen that the school library services mainly depend on private assistance, as in almost all schools in Greece, as Professor Sofia Gavrilidis at the University of Thessaloniki reported in the UNESCO World Book Day meeting in Rome (May, 5th 2008) and in her lecture at the University of Padua (July, 5th 2008), apart from some limited pilot projects (Döllgast, 2003).

The school library is often only implicitly included in the school and/or library legislation. Only in a few countries (such as Denmark, Croatia, Poland and France) is this type of library explicitly considered. Sweden is currently on this way with the new Education Act starting from September 2011, as reported by Anette Holmqvist during the Pre-IFLA Conference Meeting in Gotheburg on August 9, 2010. Many school librarians would be very happy if legislation in their country officially stipulated that “the government provides subsidies for development within the public and school libraries,” as is the case of the provisions of the Danish Act No. 340 of May 17, 2000. Sometimes, the school library is mentioned both in the Library Act and in the school legislation, for instance, in Spain, in Article 113 of the Ley Orgánica 2/2006:

Article 113. School libraries.

1. A school must have a school library.
2. The Education Authorities will gradually complete the library provision. They will develop a plan in order to achieve this objective within the implementation time of this Act.
3. The school library will help in promoting reading for students who access the information and other resources for teaching materials and other areas and could form in the critical use of them. Alike, they will contribute to realizing the provisions of Articles 19.3 and 26.2 of this Law.
4. The organization of a school library should be allowed to function as an open space for the educational community of its respective centres.
5. The centres will reach agreements with the respective municipalities in order to use municipal libraries with the purposes set out in this article.

(http://noticias.juridicas.com/base_datos/Admin/lo2-2006.t4.html#a113, translated by author).

The recent Spanish LEY 10/2007, June 27, de la lectura, del libro y de las bibliotecas declares that:

The results of recent studies on school libraries have contributed to an awareness of the need to strengthen the readership habits at school, which would require material and human resources and a proper approach of the functions in teaching and can be met this type of libraries.

(<http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2007/06/23/pdfs/A27140-27150.pdf>, translated by author).

The general lack of a formal recognition of the school library, both by the school legislation and by the library legislation, negatively affects school library services development at the local and national level, within the school and the whole country. In some cases there are some contradictory policies: in Spain and Italy, for instance, school library network projects have been

launched, but the position of school librarian does not officially exist yet and this complicates mid- and long-term planning and development. Being a partner in a network stimulates and assists school libraries' and librarians' development because a network usually provides training, support and information about best practices, such as within the Portuguese "Rede de Bibliotecas Escolares" (www.rbe.min-edu.pt) or the Italian "Biblioteche nelle Scuole" Project (www.biblioscuole.it). The school library directory (www.fundaciongsr.es/bescolares), set up by the Spanish "Fundacion German Sanchez Ruiperez," provides useful information and resources. These are just some examples of a progressive enhancement of school library services standards. The participation of school libraries in the local or national library network may help to implement an OPAC system and, through it, enhance the bibliographic offerings (see, for instance, the Luxembourg Union Catalogue at URL www.bibnet.lu, or the Portuguese one, accessible at URL www.rbe.min-edu.pt/np4/38)

3 Goals of the School Library

According to the IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto which affirms that "the school library is integral to the educational process," school library services should foster and enhance the school's mission and curriculum, and should, consequently, provide the school community with a stimulating environment for all learners (e.g., children, parents, teachers and school staff). The goals which are outlined in the Manifesto are usually met only in part, due to the lack of different kind of resources (e.g., collections, space, equipment and staff). Nevertheless, there is a progressively increasing number of best practices which are stimulated by formal or informal networks, national or local projects, and above all, the commitment and the enthusiasm of the practitioners themselves in the field.

More scientific and professional literature in the school librarianship field is now available in many languages, and this offers support to professionals (and to would-be professionals). This literature presents new concepts of the school library as the centre of the school and of the learning process (see, for instance, Casastán, 2002; Centelles, 2007) and of the school library as a dynamic learning environment (Christensen, 2007). Access to this literature, of course, helps professional development and the acquisition of a deeper awareness and insight of the value of the school library.

4 Staff

The IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto affirms that the

school librarian is the professionally qualified staff member responsible for planning and managing the school library, supported by as adequate staffing as possible, working together with all members of the school community, and liaising with the public library and others.

Research findings demonstrate that the library staff, when well trained and qualified, make a difference in school library services: nevertheless, school librarian's education and training, qualification and recognition are difficult issues still to be addressed at a European level. The situation in this field varies very much from country to country and sometimes within the same country.

Education for school librarianship can, as is done at some Spanish universities such as Vic, Extremadura, Salamanca and others, be offered as a specific course with a profile of its own (Carpalho Bautista, 2002; 2003), or some school library educational elements may be included in the teacher's academic education. More often, in-service training and post-graduate courses offer a teacher wanting to enter the field of school librarianship the possibility to become educated and trained in the school library field and to acquire some relevant competences (e.g., in school library organization and management, or curriculum related activities). Those specific qualifications may be preferred, but are not necessarily recognized or required by the Education Authority (national or local)—as it happens in Italy—or can be mandatory as in Portugal where, since 2009, a teacher is appointed to a post in a school library, after being educated and trained at academic level and within extensive national school library network programmes.

In some cases, a Library and Information Science diploma offered as a postgraduate specialization is required. In France, since 1989, a teacher, after his/her graduation in a subject, can join the two year postgraduate course in Information Science and obtain the CAPES de documentation (Durpaire, 2004). This qualification is required to apply for the position of *professeur documentaliste* or "Prof. Doc" (i.e., information specialist teacher) in a secondary school (middle and high) library, while no specific qualification is required to work in a primary school library. The *documentaliste* position is a teaching one, as is clearly stated by the Fédération des Enseignants Documentalistes de l'Education Nationale (FABDEN): "Within the high school, the information specialist teacher is a teacher who, within the educational team, is responsible to make the student develop a culture of information" (translated by author). All secondary schools have their teacher-librarian/information specialist (Charrier-Ligonat, 2002). However, even though that position has existed for 20 years, the documentalistes wish they would be more appreciated as school professionals (Durpaire, 2004): the position now seems to be at a risk due to a reduction of posts (FADBEN, 2007). An education reform is currently (2010) in process: this will affect curricula both at school and university level and may imply a change in the education and training of the "Prof. Doc."

There is legislation in a number of countries establishing the position of school librarian. In Croatia, the school librarian's position was established by the National Library Act in 1997: graduates in Library and Information Science from the University of Zagreb can apply for school librarian positions. The teaching qualification is not required but many school librarians come from the teaching profession. Almost all schools (from primary to higher ones) in Croatia have set up a school library and have employed a school librarian.

In Slovenia, the Act was passed in 2007 that states that every school has to have a school library and that professional staff (teachers and librarians) must possess an adequate pedagogical and tertiary educational background. In Austria, a 1990 law states that a secondary school must have a school library and a part-time teacher librarian.

In Romania, since 2002, a full-time library position is intended for schools with 600-700 students and 8,000 books, and a half-time position for 300 students and 4,000 books; the librarian (who has to have library qualifications at academic level) is recognized as a teaching staff member. The Library Act states that "The school librarian is an integral part of the teaching, educational and instructional process" [translated by author] and that adequate funding has to be granted to the library every year.

The teacher-librarian's position is established in Poland: although there is no special plan for this, Polish teacher-librarians try to collaborate and share information and advice, and implement projects. The Polish Educational Portal "Interkl@sa" (www.interklasa.pl) has set up a forum devoted to school libraries. Another forum is "Biblioteczki w szkole" (<http://www.bibliotekawszkole.pl/forum/>). A recent school library conference was held in Warsaw: the profession, its educational implications, the role of ICT and Web 2.0 were discussed.

In June 2009 the teacher-librarian's position was established in Portugal: primary and secondary school teachers, holding a qualification in library science and specific experience in a school library, can apply for a full-time job in a school library. This was a goal and a successful outcome of intensive and ongoing action in the school library field.

The teacher-librarian may be granted a reduction of teaching hours (as in Germany, Austria or Spain). In Italy, there is no reduction of teaching hours but, as an extra-teaching job, the teacher may get a small, nominal honorarium from the school budget, or he/she may work full-time in the library when he/she is no longer able to teach classes due to a physical or mental disease. "The job of teaching librarian does not (as yet) exist in the Netherlands" (Boelens, 2007, pp. 18-19), as in most countries in Europe. It is also possible to find chartered library professionals in private, international schools or in secondary schools (e.g., in the United Kingdom); but this is not common across most of Europe (for example, in Spain, only 10% of secondary schools, mainly private ones, have library professionals on staff).

Education and training in school librarianship is offered by library associations, universities, or other bodies. In the UK, the School Library Association provides a wide range of courses (see, <http://www.sla.org.uk/training-courses.php>). In Portugal, the Gulbenkian Foundation has set up the "Theka" Project (<http://www.theka.org/>) which aims at educating and training teacher librarians, as a vital resource for schools (Calixto, 2007). In Italy, the University of Padova offers post-graduate and master's level courses.

Cooperation between Public and School Libraries

The cooperation between public and school libraries is often a controversial issue (Aaron, 1980, 1992) because many reciprocal prejudices still exist, even though cooperation could foster both young and adult readers and help them in becoming and acting as critical thinkers (Biblioteksstyrelsen, 2008). Joint initiatives in the professional development field may also help to build new strategies of collaboration (School en openbare bibliotheek werken samen, 2008), but, of course, many factors have to be carefully considered such as co-planning, budget development, evaluation criteria, and so on (Das, 2008). Reading projects (at national and local levels) often stimulate the collaboration between the public and the school library. The public library often offers the school the possibility of customized visits, extra loans, reading activities, meetings or workshops with authors or illustrators.

A school may share its library space with the public library and extend its services and facilities beyond the school community within a broader cultural and social project, jointly shared and clearly defined. It is "important for school libraries to cooperate with their local public libraries both to benefit the school and to make the most of local authority funding" (Sundt, 2002, p. 30). At the same time, the school library should clearly bear in mind its

educational mission; the librarian should be qualified in teaching since “teaching is undoubtedly needed” (Tilke, 2002, p. 71). Combined libraries services are common in many areas, e.g., in some German states (Seefeldt & Syré, 2007), or in the more recent “Bibliopoint” Project promoted by the City Council of Rome, Italy. However, this development seems to occur more due to the lack of funding or suitable premises and represents a kind of necessary or somewhat forced cooperation.

A new and interesting concept of community services with the library at the heart has been developed in the last decade in the Netherlands, the “brede school” (i.e., broad school). This concept has to take into account physical design aspects, accessibility for all (children and adults) and many other issues (Olson, 1996). In this case, the library may become the crossroads of several institutions and services (van Santen, n.d.). An example of this integration and collaboration is the Woerden Schilderskwartier near Utrecht (<http://www.regiobibliotheekhetgroenehart.nl/adult/index?h=70>).

Literacy and Reading Promotion Plans

Literacy has become a great concern to many countries in Europe as a result of the PISA surveys. Many programmes and initiatives have been launched or re-launched recently to enhance children’s reading skills. Some of them involve the school library/librarian in a clear way while others simply imply them.

In Portugal, main goal of the national reading plan “Ler+” (i.e., Read more) is to enhance literacy of Portuguese people in order to raise the country to the level of other European partners. The Plan is a Governmental initiative promoted and organised by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and the Parliament Cabinet. Literacy has been a political priority since 2006. The “Rede de Bibliotecas Escolares” (RBE), the School Library Network, is involved in the plan. RBE represents an important infrastructure, which also fosters adult literacy and reading within the context of “Ler, é para já!,” a special programme addressed to adult learners.

Slovakia has launched reading promotion initiatives such as the competition “Let’s read with Osmijanko,” a Slovak popular fairy tale figure (see <http://www.osmijanko-ba.sk/>); “Night with Andersen,” reading in libraries during night; and a competition for the most interesting event generated by a school library in occasion of the International School Library Day (formerly the fourth Monday of October, now ISLM, lasting the whole month of October).

In Spain, the 12-year reading plan, “Plan de fomento de la lectura,” was launched in 2001 in order to stimulate the Spanish people to discover the value of reading, to enhance their reading skills and acquire competencies in using different kind of media. School libraries are also involved as one of the plan’s actions (Merlo, 2006), and their role is seen also in some of the regional plans (as in Andalucia, within its reading and school library plan). Local reading promotion programmes have also been implemented by local authorities and sponsors (e.g., *Un libro es un amigo*, from the Badajoz City Council).

In the UK, 2008 was the “National Year of Reading.” It was promoted by the National Literacy Trust (NLT), “an independent charity that changes lives through literacy” (www.literacytrust.org.uk). The NLT aims at building a national passion for reading through several campaigns which actively involve schools too. Campaigns have labels such as the

“National Reading Campaign,” “Reading Champions,” and “Reading Connects”, which is addressed to primary and secondary schools. A rich website provides useful resources, toolkits and so on to help schools in building a reading community.

In Norway, “Gi rom for lesing” (i.e., Make Space for Reading, 2003-2007) was funded by the Ministry of Education and Research, as a governmental “strategic plan to stimulate a love for reading and reading skills.”

In Italy, the “Amico Libro” Project was launched in 2007 in order to stimulate and collect best practices. Each selected school got a grant of € 1,000 for buying new books: 4214 schools (almost half the total number) applied to the Ministerial call, and 2751 projects, 2/3 of the total, were submitted by nursery, primary and middle schools. This reflects the attention paid to reading both as a functional ability and as a powerful stimulus to curiosity and imagination. More schools in the North applied to the Plan than in the South of Italy. Furthermore, instead of buying (and offering) a wider range of titles, the school have in many cases bought multiple copies of the same book so that the positive impact of the funding, in terms of a larger collection of titles, was reduced.

In Ireland, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) was set up in 1997 to prevent early school leavers. Since 2001, it has involved the school library through the “Demonstration Library Project,” with results on student’s learning outcomes, interest and motivation (JCSP, 2005). Thanks to this project:

All of the libraries have established programmes of library-based classes, events and activities. Reading and writing skills are developed, reading habits nurtured and the information skills needed to navigate and participate in society are practised. Librarians, working in professional partnership with teachers, run intensive and focused programmes aimed at improving teenager’s literacy levels. A cross-curricular approach is taken to planning and designing all activities. It is an aim to have families and the wider community play an active role in activities. (http://www.jcspliteracy.ie/library_demo_activites.htm)

Foundations, such as Fundação Gulbenkian in Portugal (www.gulbenkian.pt), Fundación Germán Sánchez Ruipérez in Spain (www.fundaciongsr.es), and Stiftung Lesen in Germany (www.stiftunglesen.de), are often instigators or partners of relevant initiatives, which actively involve school libraries and librarians in reading promotion projects.

Advocacy: The Role of Associations

Marketing and advocating school libraries are crucial tasks: a strategic and effective advocacy helps in building a deeper understanding along with a better perception of the educational role and the value of the school library throughout the school and the local community. In this field, library associations play a relevant role beyond providing professional development (Agee & Lillard, 2005): they can set up initiatives, meetings, and events and provide school librarians with advocacy kits, lists of best practices, opportunities to meet and share experiences. Most national library associations have a school library section, committee or working group. There are also specific school library associations (such as the School Library Association in the UK). The IFLA School Libraries and Resource Centres Section (established in 1977), the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL), and the European Network for School Libraries and

Information Literacy (ENSIL) bring an international flavour to school librarianship in Europe. The recent formalisation of ENSIL as a Foundation (Stichting Ensil) should make it easier to reach important goals such as: initiating research on school libraries and on the school librarian profession; updating and disseminating information about them; advocating for school libraries and school librarians; communicating about school librarianship; and promoting professional development of school librarians.

International meetings held in Europe also stimulate the enhancement of school librarianship very much: they foster and motivate school librarians and give them relevant professional development. Library associations can foster librarians' training (Kõuts, 2007), provide important stimuli both to librarians and to government, and help to overcome the weakness of school library services, for instance in countries, which have become independent in the last decades and still have to face many political or economical problems, e.g., in Latvia (<http://www.goethe.de/z/30/infomoe/lettland/delett11.htm>), Estonia and Lithuania (Gudauskas, 1994) or have suffered from the Cold War as did Romania (Anghelescu, 2001).

Besides initiatives in the professional development field, a library association can play a relevant role in the legislative field: for instance, the Russian School Library Association (RUSLA) has been one of the main initiators of changing the Education Act. RUSLA is very much committed to "raising the social status and professional skills of school librarians; protecting the interest of school librarians, to protect, first and foremost, the interest of children by strengthening an important environment for their development" (Zhukova, 2008). Some of the goals of the Association are: working out a package of bills aimed at improving two Russian federal laws—"On Education" (no. 3266-1, July 10, 1992) and "On Library" (no. 78, December 29, 1994)—in terms of regulations about school libraries; and continuing to involve key politicians and organizing professional development initiatives (e.g., former President Putin took part in the first RUSLA Congress on July 2nd 2007, and his wife, Mrs. Putina, is much committed and active in supporting the school libraries).

The Hessian School Library Association, LAG Schulbibliotheken (<http://www.schulbibliotheken.de/>), which will be celebrating its 20th year in March 2011, promoted and organized--through its former President (and founder), Prof. Günter Schlamp--School Library Day in another German Region (Brandenburg) in 2008 and, since then, has been working very closely with schools and authorities. In 2010, a new association was established, the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Schulbibliotheken in Berlin-Brandenburg" (<http://schulbibliotheken-berlin-brandenburg.de/>), in order to support the school librarians' professional development and recognition.

International yearly celebrations, such as the formerly ISLD or International School Library Day until 2007 and currently the ISLM or International School Library Month (<http://www.iasl-online.org/events/islm/>) in October, or the UNESCO World Book Day on April 23rd, are good occasions for advocating and promoting the school library services within the school and the local community. Furthermore, working on the suggested themes--the 2008 ISLM was about "Literacy and Learning at your School Library"--is always an opportunity to stimulate students, teachers and parents and an opportunity for school librarians to experience, reflect, find new ways of collaboration within the school and the community and with colleagues in different countries. The combination of two international library events in Europe

in 2009, the IFLA WLIC (World Library and Information Conference) in August in Milan and the 38th IASL Conference in September in Padua and Abano Terme, gathered an international audience and offered an interesting opportunity, especially for European librarians/information specialists, to discuss issues of their profession, to effectively communicate the value of their work, commitment and efforts, and to claim needed attention to the delicate and strategic sector they represent.

Challenges for 21st Century School Libraries in Europe

Like the leopard, the school library situation in Europe is on the move, and it is rapidly changing. Education and training along with networking has been helping school librarians in many ways: the exchange of experiences and reflections serves to foster a process of change both at a professional level and at a personal level, both in the school library area and in the wider school/community context. The new frontier of literacy and information literacy education presents a challenge for school library services to demonstrate how they are useful both in school curriculum enhancement and in local community development.

“One of the main barriers to innovation in Europe is that the European market is still too fragmented” (ISTAG, 2006, p. 38). This fragmentation and varying quality also affects education and school instruction (Commission of the European Communities, 2007). The Key Competences Framework defined by the European Union at the end of 2006 offers an interesting frame which implicitly involves the school library to make its young patrons acquire the eight strategic competences. Of course, the educational goals (and the school library goals) would be met in a more efficient, effective and successful way if:

- educational and cultural policies at European level included the school library as a cornerstone both of the school and of the library systems;
- school librarianship were (at least partially) included both in the teachers’ and librarians’ education and training: the teachers need to know how to use the library as a learner-centred teaching methodology and an educational tool and environment; and the children’s/public and academic librarians need to know how to set up and implement their user education and curriculum-related plans in a more effective way;
- the education and training in school librarianship were recognised and compulsory for those who want to be employed in a school library/information centre;
- the school librarian/information specialist were recognized as an information professional and as a teaching professional;
- school leaders, teachers, parents, and media could know more about the positive correlation between students’ learning outcomes and the availability and use of good school library services within the curriculum and the extent to which children benefit from a school library/information centre at the very heart of the school.

Like a leopard, school library services in Europe can grow and adapt to a rapidly changing environment. The size and spacing of the leopard's characteristic spots, generally arranged in rosettes, also vary greatly: the "rosettes" in our field may mean that attention and funding may be put more on reading promotion in a country, or on information literacy in another one, or on professional development and so on. Despite these differences in pattern, however, there is a basic, common characteristic in all "leopards": their extraordinary agility. The school library 'leopards' throughout Europe, are demonstrating that agility in facing many difficulties, change and challenges and in taking the risks and the responsibilities needed to enhance their school library services and activities, preparing pupils and students for the future.

The development of high quality school library services throughout Europe might enhance students' preparation for lifelong learning, help them develop the concept of European citizenship and overcome still existing divisions and prejudices, and help them to collaborate with each other in order to stimulate positive innovation and change in the "Old Continent": this is an open page yet to be written (Romano, 2005).

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APPENDIX

Useful Links

a) International

International Association of School Librarianship (IASL)

<http://www.iasl-online-org>

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), School Library Resource Centers Section

<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s11/index.htm>.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

<http://www.oecd.org>

OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms

<http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=871>

UNESCO's Information and Media Literacy Portal

<http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php->

[URL_ID=15886&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15886&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

b) Europe

European Council of International Schools – ECIS:

<http://www.ecis.org/>

The European Library Portal

<http://www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/index.html>

European NAvigator (ENA), the history of a united Europe on the Internet

<http://www.ena.lu>

European Network of Innovative Schools (ENIS)

<http://enis.eun.org>

European Network for School Libraries and Information Literacy (ENSIL)

<http://www.ensil-online.org>

European Schoolnet. The Gateway to Education in Europe

<http://www.eun.org/portal/index.htm>

Eurydice: The Information Network on Education in Europe

<http://www.eurydice.org/portal/page/portal/Eurydice>

School Libraries As Multimedia Learning centres In-service Training (SLAMIT)

<http://www.slamit.org>.

c) European Countries

AUSTRIA

Bibliotheken-Service für Schulen [Schools' Library Service]

<http://www.bibliothekenservice.at/start-bs.html>

Der Büchereiverband Österreichs

<http://www.bvoe.at/>

BELGIUM

Association Belge de Documentation [Belgian Association for Documentation]

<http://www.abd-bvd.be/>

School en Bibliotheek:

http://www.schoolenbibliotheek.be/portal/page?_pageid=1113,1&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Vlaamse vereniging voor Bibliotheek-, Archief- en Documentatiewezen – VVBAD [Flemish Association of Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres]

<http://www.vvbad.be>

BULGARIA

[Bulgarian Library Association]

<http://www.lib.bg/>

CROATIA

Hrvatsko Knjizicarsko Drustvo [Croatian Library Association]

<http://www.hkdrustvo.hr/>

Hrvatska udruga školskih knjižnicara [Croatian Association of School Librarians]

<http://www.husk.hr/>

CZECH REPUBLIC

Association of Library and Information Professionals of the Czech Republic

["SKIP" in Czech]

http://www.nkp.cz/o_knihovnach/konsorcia/skip/english/index_e.htm

DENMARK

Danmarks Skolebibliotekarere [School Librarians' Association]

<http://www.skolebib.org>

Kommunernes Skolebiblioteksforening [Municipal School Library Association]

<http://www.ksbf.dk/page/foreningen.html>

Skolebiblioteket [School library area and resources within the EMU portal]

<http://www.emu.dk/gsk/skolebib/index.html>

ESTONIA

Eesti Raamatukoguhoidjate Ühing, Kooliraamatukogude Sektsioon [Estonian Library Association, School Libraries Section]

http://www2.nlib.ee/ERY/kooli_rk_sekts/tegevus.html#2008.

FINLAND

Suomen koulukirjastoyhdistys ry [The Finnish School Library Association]

<http://www.suomenkoulukirjastoyhdistys.fi>

Bookster at Helsinki City Library

<http://www.lib.hel.fi/en-GB/children/>.

FRANCE

Fédération des enseignants documentalistes de l'éducation nationale (FADBEN) [Federation of school teacher-information specialists]

<http://www.fadben.asso.fr>

SavoirCDI

<http://savoircdi.cndp.fr/accueil.htm>.

GERMANY

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Schulbibliotheken in Berlin-Brandenburg [Work Group of School Libraries in Berlin-Brandenburg]

<http://schulbibliotheken-berlin-brandenburg.de/>

Basedow1764's Weblog

<http://basedow1764.wordpress.com/>.

Schulmediothek. Das Portal rund um das Thema Schumediotek [School Media Library Portal of the German Library Association, Deutscher Bibliotheksverband]

<http://www.schulmediothek.de/>

LAG Schulbibliotheken in Hessen e.V. [Assian School Library Association]

<http://www.schulbibliotheken.de>

Bibliotheksportal [Library Portal], Kinderbibliotheken, Jugendbibliotheken, Schulbibliotheken [Children's; Young Adult and School Library webpage]

<http://www.bibliotheksportal.de/hauptmenue/bibliotheken/bibliotheken-in-deutschland/bibliothekslandschaft/kinder-jugend-und-schulbibliotheken/>.

GREECE

[Greek Library Association]

<http://www.eebep.gr/>.

HUNGARY

Magyar Könyvtárosok Egyesülete [Hungarian Library Association]

<http://www.mke.oszk.hu/>.

HUNGARY (continued)

Könyvtárostánárok Egyesülete [School Library Association]

<http://www.ktep.hu/>

IRELAND

School Library Association in the Republic of Ireland (SLARI)

<http://slari.ie/Index.htm>

ITALY

Associazione italiana biblioteche, Commissione nazionale biblioteche scolastiche (AIB, CNBS) [Italian Library Association, National Committee on School Libraries]

<http://www.aib.it/aib/commiss/cnbse/cnbse.htm3>

Associazione dei documentalisti scolastici italiani (A.Doc.S.I.)

<http://www.biblioinrete.net/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=9>.

Coordinamento nazionale bibliotecari scolastici (CONBS) [National School Librarians' Coordination]

<http://conbs.altervista.org/>.

Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (MPI) [Italian Ministry of Education]

Amico Libro [Book Project]

http://www.pubblica.istruzione.it/eventiprogetti/amico_libro.shtml

Biblioscuole [School library Project]:

<http://www.biblioscuole.it/public/>.

LATVIA

Latvijas Skolu biblioteku asociacija (ALSL) [Association of Latvian School Librarians]

<http://www.liis.lv/LIIS/english/main.htm>.

LITHUANIA

Lietuvos bibliotekininku draugija [Lithuanian Library Association]

<http://www.lbd.lt/eindex.htm>.

LUXEMBOURG

Association Luxembourgeoise des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes (ALBAD) [Luxembourg association of librarians, archivists and documentalists]

<http://www.albad.lu/>.

ALBAD School Library Section:

<http://www.albad.lu/downloads/albadsectionbiblscol.pdf>.

MALTA

Malta Library and Information Association (MaLIA)

<http://malia-malta.info/>

The NETHERLANDS

Landelijke Werkgroep Schoolmediathecarissen Voortgezet Onderwijs (LWSVO) [Dutch School Library Association]

http://www.nvbonline.nl/273/lwsvo%3A_mediathecarissen.html.

Vereniging van Openbare Bibliotheken (VOB) [Public Libraries Association] "Schoolbieb.nl" Project:

<http://www.debibliotheken.nl/content.jsp?objectid=7483>.

NORWAY

Skolebibliotekar-foreiningen i Norge (SiN) [The Norwegian Association of School Librarians]

<http://www.skolebibliotekarforeningen.no/index.php?page=index.php>.

Gi rom for lesing [A room for reading]

http://www.skolenettet.no/moduler/templates/Module_Overview.aspx?id=%0917165&eplanguage=NO.

POLAND

Biblioteka Szkolna

<http://standardy.bibliotekaszkolna.net/>.

Biblioteki Interka@si

<http://www.biblioteka.edu.pl/>.

BibWeb. Kurs Internetowy dla Bibliotekarzy [On line Course for School Librarians]

<http://www.bibweb.pl/>.

ENSIL Poland

<http://ensil.pl/>

Pedagogiczna Biblioteka Wojewódzka im. prof. Tadeusza Kotarbinskiego w Łodzihttp, Serwis biblioteka szkolna

http://www.pbw.lodz.pl/biblioteka_szkolna.htm

The Polish Library Association, School Library Section

<http://www.ebib.info/content/category/10/69/61/>.

PORTUGAL

Associação Portuguesa de Bibliotecários, Arquivistas e Documentalistas (BAD) [Portuguese Association of Librarians, Archivists and Information Specialists]

<http://www.apbad.pt/>

BAD School library section

http://www.apbad.pt/Seccoes/S_DocInfEscolar/SDIE.htm

Rede de Bibliotecas Escolares – RBE [School Library Network]

<http://www.rbe.min-edu.pt/>

PORTUGAL (continued)

Plano Nacional de leitura "Ler+"

www.planonacionaldeleitura.gov.pt

Theka: Projecto Gulbenkian de Formação de Professores para o Desenvolvimento de Bibliotecas Escolares
[Theka: A Gulbenkian Foundation Project for the school library development]

www.theka.org

ROMANIA

Asociatia Bibliotecarilor din Învatamânt [România [Romanian Library Association]

<http://www.abr.org.ro/abir/index.html>

Ministerul Ministerul Educatiei si Cercetarii, Inspectoratul Scolar al Judetului Iasi, Biblioteca scolare
[Ministry of Education, School Inspectorate, School Libraries]

<http://isj.is.edu.ro/site/page.php?16>

RUSSIA

Russian Library Association [with a School Library Section]

<http://www.rba.ru/eng/index.html>

Russian School Library Association (RUSLA)

<http://www.rusla.ru/eng/#/eng/association/>

SLOVAC REPUBLIC

Slovenská asociácia knižníc [Slovak Library Association]

<http://www.sakba.sk/>

Slovenská pedagogická knižnica [School Library Association]

<http://www.spgk.sk/>

SLOVENE

Zveza bibliotekarskih društev Slovenije [Union of Slovene Library Associations]

<http://www.zbds-zveza.si/>

Šolskih knjižnicarjev Slovenije [Slovene School Library Association]

<http://www.dsks.si/>

SPAIN

Aplicación para la gestión de bibliotecas escolares (ABIES)

<http://abies.pntic.mec.es/>

Asociación Andaluza de Bibliotecarios

<http://www.aab.es/Joomla/>

Col·legi Oficial de Bibliotecaris-Documentalistes de Catalunya [Official Association of Librarians-Documentalists of Catalonia]

<http://www.cobdc.org/>

SPAIN (continued)

Ministerio de Cultura [Ministry of Cultural Heritage], “Plan de Fomento de la Lectura” [“Reading Promotion Plan”] 2004-2007

<http://www.mcu.es/libro/MC/PFL/index.html>.

SWEDEN

Kolla källan, Myndigheten för skolutveckling

<http://kollakallan.skolutveckling.se/>

Skolbibliotek

<http://www.skolbibliotek.se/>

Svensk biblioteksörening [Swedish Library Association]

<http://www.biblioteksforeningen.org/index.html>

SWITZERLAND

Association des Bibliothèques et Bibliothécaires Suisses (BBS) [Swiss Library Association]:

http://www.bbs.ch/xml_1/internet/de/intro.cfm

TURKEY

Türk Kütüphaneciler Dernegi [Turkish Library Association]

<http://www.kutuphaneci.org.tr/web/node.php>

UKRAINE

Slavutich Association of School Libraries

<http://www.sasl.at.ua>.

UNITED KINGDOM

Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), - School Library Group:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/specialinterestgroups/bysubject/school/>

School Library Group Scotland (SLG) [Scottish Branch of the CILIP School Libraries Group]

<http://www.slainte.org.uk/cilips/sigs/slgs/index.htm>

School Library Association (SLA)

<http://www.sla.org.uk>

Strongest Links: the Website of UK School Librarians

<http://www.strongest-links.org.uk/>.