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Editorial

Learning From Our Past

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An Ahistorical Stance

This issue of *School Libraries Worldwide* was conceived as a challenge to what the Editors see as the ahistorical stance of our field. Unfortunately, the responses to our challenge did not cause us to change our view. There were only few articles submitted for this issue that were, indeed, papers exploring the history of school librarianship. Many other articles submitted for the theme were, instead, descriptions of the development of school libraries in a particular country. Such descriptions were and are valuable documents, but they did not address the theme of Learning From Our Past. *The School Library Worldwide* reviewers and editors were looking for papers that addressed the history of school libraries or of an aspect of school library practice in such a way that the readers of the paper could "learn from the past." Papers for this issue needed to have a strong analytical framework or organizing theme as well as a rich description of events.

Why is there so little interest in the history of school librarianship? Here I can only speculate. Perhaps, because there is so little written about the history of school libraries and school librarianship, we believe that there is no history to be told. Perhaps, because as a field school librarianship draws from and encompasses two fields, we have had difficulty in thinking about it as a field with its own history. Perhaps, because the education of school library workers often emphasizes practical issues and strategies, the history of the field is ignored in favor of more pressing matters. Whatever the reason for the ahistorical stance of our field (and my speculations could very well have missed the actual or more plausible reasons), we need to know our history. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, 1953). Those who do not know the history of school libraries and school librarianship, at least in their own community and country or region, are likely to waste valuable time and energy, for example, trying to address "new" problems with "new" solutions, when those are really old problems that have in the past not been successfully addressed in the ways now being tried.

Taking Up the Challenge

Three authors have taken up the challenge of exploring aspects of school library history in ways that help us to learn from that history. The first theme article looks at the evidence of the existence of school libraries before the 20th century in three countries; the second explores the changes in school libraries that come about when there is a major change in the political system of a country; and the third presents the development of a key philosophical concept underpinning school librarianship in one country.

In "The Schole Lybrarie: Images From Our Past," Laurel A. Clyde challenges the assumption made by the authors of many general histories of education and librarianship that school libraries are a 20th-century development. She points out that school libraries have existed in schools in the English speaking world since at least the 8th century. Parts of the history of school library development in the English-speaking world have been told in a few dissertations, but this article demonstrates that this is a fascinating story that needs to be told in a more accessible form to a wider audience.

In "A Golden Age and a Stone Age of School Libraries in Lithuania," Vita Mozuraite describes school library development over the last three decades in one small European country. The author plays with the idea of a Golden Age and a Stone Age in a way that heightens our understanding of the contrasts between school libraries in a period of repression and a period of independence. The article will also remind readers of the difficulty we all experience when we face major changes in the demands of our work life.

In the third theme article, "Contending Voices: Intellectual Freedom in American Public School Libraries, 1827-1940," Rebecca P. Butler traces the history of the development of the concept of intellectual freedom in American public school libraries, over more than a century. It was surprising to me how recently the commitment to intellectual freedom became a core tenet of school librarianship in the United States, and it made me wonder about the history of this aspect of our field in my own country and other countries.

School Libraries as Tools for Teaching and Learning

The Of Special Interest section of this issue focuses on the development of school libraries as tools for teaching and learning. Melvyn D. Rainey, in "Primary School Libraries in Fiji: A Research Report," outlines the results of a survey of primary school libraries in Fiji. The study found that unsuitable facilities, lack of library training, and inadequate collections were making it difficult for staff to provide adequate library services. As is the case in so many countries, the situation was found to be worse in rural schools than in urban ones. The article makes clear the daunting challenges of those who are working hard in many developing countries to create school libraries that can, indeed, be tools for teaching and learning.

Louise Limberg, in "Model School Libraries: Tools or Threats? Reflections on a Development Project in Sweden," analyzes the results of a school library development project in the County of Orebro, Sweden. The key finding was that school libraries can be purposeful tools for teaching and learning, but they may also be experienced as threats by teachers who prefer traditional teaching. Critical factors in the successful project schools included: teachers and librarians working together in teams, principals who saw the library as an integral part of teaching and learning, and collaboration between public and school library staff.

Mieko Nagakura, in "Shirabe-Gakushu: A Japanese trial of Resource Based Teaching in Large Classes," explains a Japanese model of information skills instruction that uses resource-based teaching strategies appropriate for large classes. She describes in the article a successful case of Shirabe-Gakushu implemented as an experimental project at Sheishin Primary School in Sagaiharu City, Japan. Readers will find in the project a number of factors that led to that success: the project was initiated by the principal, the teachers were accustomed to working in teams, there was opportunity for teachers to access professional learning directly related to the project, and the school made use of both internal and external expertise in evaluating and refining the project.

Genevieve Hart, in "Information Literacy Education in Disadvantaged Schools: A Case Study of Project Work at a Primary School in South Africa," reports the findings of a study of project work in a grade 7 class in a disadvantaged primary school on the Cape Flats, Cape Town, South Africa. Project work is encouraged by the new South African school curriculum. The study explored the potential of project work for information literacy education. The study found, however, crucial gaps between official policy and classroom practice. Teachers had not had the opportunity to learn about project work in their teacher education, and the opportunities for professional learning related to project work were too brief and too few to enable teachers to develop the complex understandings and skills needed for effective project work and for effective teaching of information literacy.

A Farewell and a Welcome

Change is always a part of our world, and it is part of the small world of *School Libraries Worldwide* as well. The Editors and Editorial Board say "Farewell" and "Many thanks" to Pierre G.J. Overduin, formerly of the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa, and a member of the Editorial Board of *School Libraries Worldwide* from the first issue in January 1995. As Editor, I have appreciated Pierre's encouraging words, and I have always valued his thoughtful and insightful comments about the papers he was sent for review. I first met Pierre at the IASL conference in Iceland in 1987, where he gave a research paper on school libraries in South Africa. Pierre has been involved with school libraries throughout his professional career, first as

Head of the Provincial School Library Service of the Province of Transvaal and then at the university level as a school library educator. Now retired from the University, he has taken the position of full-time librarian of the growing Netherlands Library in Cape Town, a position that leaves him little free time and takes him away from the world of school librarianship. Thank you, Pierre, for your contributions to the development of *School Libraries Worldwide*.

I also want to welcome a new Editorial Board member, Paulette Bernhard from the University of Montreal, Canada. Paulette's teaching and research interests include the study of school libraries, their integration with teaching, and their link with school success. As Chair of the IFLA Section of School Libraries and Resource Centers (1993-1997), Paulette took editorial responsibility for the 1997 K.G. Saur publication, *Resources pour les bibliothèques et centres documentaires scolaires/Resourcebook for School Libraries and Resource Centers*.

Looking Ahead

The July 1999 issue, Library Power Program Evaluation, will present the key findings of the Library Power program evaluation and the implications for school library programs. The Library Power program, funded by the DeWitt Wallace Reader's Digest Fund, was designed to improve student learning through improved school library programs. Library Power projects were carried out in 20 sites across the United States. The Guest Editors for this theme issue will be Dianne McAfee Hopkins and Douglas Zweizig, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who were co-chairs of the program evaluation. In addition to site and school-level case studies, there will be articles focusing on student learning opportunities, collection development, collaboration, and flexible access. Several summary articles will look at the connections among professional development, school reforms, instruction, curriculum, and institutionalization. The Past-President of IASL, Sigrun Klara Hannesdottir, will review the articles prepared by those involved in the program evaluation and present implications from the Library Power program for the international school library community.

The major work for the second issue of *School Libraries Worldwide* for this year is well underway. Millenium fever has begun to heighten in my part of the world. Together, those two things have prompted me to look back over the first five years of the journal. I am pleased with the development of the journal and hope that you, its readers, are as well. The Editors and Editorial Board have been fortunate to have the full support of the officers of the International Association of School Librarianship, and we look ahead with pleasure to working together to continue to improve the journal as an international vehicle for disseminating research and scholarship in school librarianship.