Article

Information literacy in United Kingdom schools: evolution, current state and prospects

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the evolution of information skills and information literacy (IL) work and associated research in UK schools over the past thirty years as reflected in the literature. A brief report is then offered of a recent small study of library-based IL work in primary schools in England, conducted by one of the authors, using structured focus groups of teachers and library assistants and telephone interviews with headteachers.

The remainder of the paper reports on the IL aspects of the first major surveys of UK post-primary school libraries and what librarians do for more than twenty years. It draws on an activity survey of library staff in 1,044 schools in the UK, conducted through a combination of peer interviews with an e-survey, across a range of post-primary schools. A set of questions was asked about the preferred term used in the school for IL, the extent of learning support by library staff, and the distribution of IL efforts across student years. These replies were then compared with responses about management supervision and about librarian-generated planning to show that these are both influencing factors in IL work. Further questions were asked about the types of IL work undertaken by library staff – from supporting IL efforts of teachers to conducting lessons in the library or classroom and preparing guidance for students. Respondents then identified the phases of the IL cycle on which they concentrated their efforts and the main activities which they engaged in when collaborating with teachers. In presenting the results, comparisons are made between replies from professionally-qualified librarians and other categories of respondent.

Three approaches to IL intervention in schools are then presented, drawing upon activity descriptions contributed by survey respondents (including those interviewed). These are characterised as:

Sporadic opportunism;

Systematic development;

Strategic orchestration.

A brief comment is made on the limitations of the survey and some conclusions are offered, relating to the growing gap between 'the best and the rest', the implications of declining school library budgets at all levels, and the difference that a professionally-qualified school librarian can make to IL work in the school. A possible way forward is offered for schools seeking to develop their IL work.

Keywords:
School libraries; United Kingdom; primary schools; secondary schools; independent schools; research; information skills; information literacy.

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1. From information skills to information literacy
School librarians in the UK have been involved in what they have successively described as information skills and information literacy for more than thirty years, but this work has never been consolidated at a level that made it a consistent feature of teaching and learning in schools. Rather, there have been various stages along the way when attention was focused on information literacy so that it rose to the forefront of school library work, even if it has not been fully embraced by schools (as we will show below). A major inhibitor throughout this period is that, although successive UK governments have made empty references to the importance of school libraries and their work, (most recently, the United Kingdom Government in 2010 described school libraries as a *"key resource for pupils and teachers"*) they have never required schools to have a school library, let alone set standards for school library service delivery.

Some of the focal points in the development of UK information literacy work by school librarians are listed in broadly chronological order below:

1979 – 1987: a cluster of research-based publications was produced in this period, often with the active support of the British Library Research and Development Department, and commencing with *Educating Information Users in Schools* by Irving & Snape (1979). Further stimulation was provided by the Working Group sponsored by the British Library and the Schools Council (Marland, 1981). This working group proposed using the term 'information skills' to describe the skills needed by students to find, organise and use information. Other publications focused on study and information skills in primary schools (Griffin, 1983), study skills at post-16 level (Tabberer & Allman, 1981), the information needs of sixth formers (Rudduck and Hopkins, 1984), and specifically on information skills development (Tabberer, 1987).

1985 – 1989: during these years the British Library Research and Development Department funded a specific post of Liaison Officer for Information Skills in Schools, aimed at bridging the gap between research and practice. The post was based at the National Foundation for Educational Research. Sharon Markless, the post holder, was inter alia, joint editor of an influential and widely distributed set of practical information skills tools designed for use in secondary schools (Markless & Lincoln, 1986).

1988: The *Education Reform Act* introduced a number of changes to school management in England. One change was that school budgets were devolved to schools from the local education authorities which had hitherto provided a number of central services and ensured

an element of equitability in development of school libraries. From this point on, all significant financial decisions affecting State schools would be taken by the school governors and senior managers, including decisions about school library expenditure.

1987 – 1994: a further flurry of research reports appeared, with a focus on: the curriculum (Hopkins 1987; Howard 1991); on information technology skills (Carter & Monaco, 1987; Irving 1990); on the role of the school librarian (Valentine & Nelson, 1988); and on teaching skills for learning in initial teacher education (Best et al., 1990). These reports were accompanied by a review of earlier publications on information skills in schools (Heeks, 1989) and, tangentially, work on information skills in further education (Markless and others, 1992; Morrison & Markless, 1992), as well as on the school library contribution to teaching and learning (Streatfield & Markless, 1994). This programme of research came to a halt when the library research functions of the British Library were subsumed into the Library and Information Commission in 1995, apart from one major school libraries research project (Williams & Wavell, 2001), focused on the school library role in supporting learning.

1999 – 2001: the UK national training programme of teachers in educational uses of ICT had a parallel strand for school librarians. Librarians and their schools opted for a preferred approved training provider. When (as in the case of LA ICT Training Consortium led by the Library Association) the training on offer covered all the main aspects of ICT-supported school librarianship, schools choosing this route could ensure that their librarians had a refresher course in information literacy development.

April 2000: *Fair Funding* - another central government initiative - ensured that the schools library services offered by many local education authorities to schools as a more or less unique feature of educational support in the UK, would henceforward be subject to quasi-market conditions. In local authorities which had maintained schools library support services to their schools, the previously ring-fenced funding for these services was distributed to the schools, notionally to be spent on school libraries, leaving headteachers to decide whether to buy-in these services (incidentally, no comparable funds were allocated for school libraries in local authorities which did not have a schools library service). Predictably (see Markless et al., 2000), this has led to a gradual diminution in schools library services and to some service closures, through school funding attrition over time.

2001 to date: In its brief moment in the sun before its name was changed, Re:source, (the new national body for libraries, archives and museums which took over the functions of the Library and Information Commission in 2000) funded two research overviews of the impact of school libraries on achievement and learning in secondary and in primary schools (Williams et al., 2001A; 2001B). Unfortunately, yet another change of name to the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council signalled a shift in focus which led to a loss of interest in library research, with the result that people concerned with information literacy research in schools in the UK have had to depend upon small scale research studies conducted by committed academics, such as Herring et al., 2002; Smith & Hepworth, 2007; or Crawford & Irving, 2007. A noteworthy exception here is the substantial work on the teachers' perspective conducted by Williams & Coles (2007). The key findings for practice from this body of research have been filtered through to school librarians by information literacy workshop facilitators employed by CILIP (since the mid-1990s), the School Library Association and various schools library services. Key learning points have also been applied through consultancy, again notably that conducted by many schools library services.

2003-4: In an unusual show of government interest in school libraries, the Department for Education and Skills established a School Libraries Working Group which commissioned school library self-evaluation frameworks and supporting materials for primary and for secondary schools. Both these DfES publications had substantial information literacy self-evaluation elements (Streatfield & Markless, 2004; Markless & Streatfield, 2004).

1985 to date: throughout this period there were occasional publications offering practical guidance in information skills or literacy development for schools. These publications ranged from Avann (1985) on teaching information skills in primary schools, Irving (1985) and later the National Council for Educational Technology (1993) who looked at extending this work across the curriculum, to Herring (1992; 2004; 2011), who focused on information technology and the school librarian and Dubber, who offered guidance for primary schools on behalf of the School Library Association (two publications - Dubber, 2008). The theme of teaching information skills in schools was resumed by, amongst others, Brown (1994) and Herring again (1996), but before the information literacy teaching theme could become too complex, Rogers (1994) contributed a useful overview. The field was not confined to library-focused participants: a pedagogical perspective was provided by Wray (1985; 1999) on information skills teaching through project work; a skills framework developed by Wray & Lewis (1997) was later incorporated into Key Stage 3 of the Government's Literacy Strategy for schools (aimed at students about 14 years old); and their work on writing frames, offered as scaffolds for non-fiction writing (Lewis & Wray, 1997) has been influential, especially in primary schools. Other significant offerings came from Waterhouse (1990) and Powell (1991) on flexible learning, Gibbs (1988) on 'learning by doing' and Tann (1988) on topic work in primary schools; there have also been contributions focused on information literacy teaching and learning in the Web 2.0 environment (Markless & Streatfield, 2008) and on becoming integral to teaching and learning (chapter 3 in Markless, 2009). More recently, these publications have tended to be generic in character in order to appeal to education librarians in any setting (e.g. Martin & Madigan, 2006; Goodwin & Parker, 2008); this tendency is continuing with a new set of 'tips' now available(Blanchett et al., 2010).

The UK information literacy in schools activity has also been influenced by significant overseas research (usually at one remove as interpreted by IL researchers and workshop facilitators), especially work conducted in the US, Australasia and Scandinavia, as reviewed by Virkus (for Europe - 2003) and as summarised by the Scholastic Research Foundation (mainly US research - 2008) and Loertscher & Woolls (again with a US bias, but also including major research from other countries - 2002). In a variation on the research dissemination theme, the School Library Association arranged for Professor Ross Todd of Rutgers University to run his inspirational workshops for UK school librarians in 2002 and 2004.

2. Surveying the field

The main part of this article focuses on recent UK investigations of IL in schools conducted by the authors. These consist of: a small-scale investigation of IL in primary schools; a small study, commissioned by the Reading Agency and the School Library Association (conducted in England between October 2007; and April 2008) and two out of the three UK-related national surveys (conducted between December 2009 and April 2010).

2.1 Size and scope of the studies

Primary schools

The small-scale study was conducted through two overlapping phases: consultation with a variety of headteacher, teachers and library staff through focus groups and telephone interviews and a 'mini-survey' of schools using a short e-mail questionnaire (not reported on here). We conducted 10 semi-structured telephone interviews with primary school headteachers (8) or their nominees (2). Three structured focus groups were held (with the help of the schools library services (SLSs)) in Portsmouth, Hertfordshire and Leicester, involving a total of 45 teachers with library responsibility and library assistants, supported by 8 SLS staff.

Secondary, independent, middle and special schools

This work (Streatfield et al, 2010) was funded by the Wendy Drewett Bequest which is administered by the Charted Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). A baseline e-survey of secondary, independent, middle and special school libraries focused on describing the library and its resources. On completing the baseline survey, respondents were invited to click through to a more detailed activities survey and to provide more information about what school librarians do, including their work in relation to IL. In 15 local authority target areas, chosen to provide a geographical spread and a range of local authority types, respondents were given the additional option of an interview, in order to build up a more detailed picture of the work of school librarians. (The parallel primary school library survey conducted at this time did not focus on IL.)

The surveys, managed by David Streatfield, Sharon Markless and Simon Rae-Scott, all of Information Management Associates, were both commissioned and actively supported by the School Libraries Group of CILIP, who, *inter alia*, provided a team of volunteer interviewers who were specially trained to conduct the survey interviews. (Sue Shaper, the other author of this article, was Chair of the SLG at the commencement of the project and was actively involved throughout.) 1,542 schools responded to the secondary and other schools baseline survey and, more pertinently for the current theme, 1,044 librarians completed one form or another of the activities survey, of whom: 44% were qualified librarians; 6% held dual qualifications in education and librarianship; 3% were teachers who had been assigned additional responsibility for day-to-day management and operation of the library; 9% had an HE qualification in another subject discipline (i.e. not librarianship or education; these people are identified as 'Graduates' below); and 31% were neither qualified librarians nor graduates.

Replies were received from 762 secondary schools (73%), 177 independent schools (17%), 31 middle schools (3%) 17 academy schools (2%) and 57 others (5%), including a few that did not identify their type.

3. Information literacy in primary schools

UK primary schools have seldom been able to afford to employ a dedicated school librarian (although a few have entered into sharing arrangements, usually brokered by schools library services, which involve a professionally qualified librarian sharing time across several schools). Partly as a result of this dearth of specialist librarians there has been relatively little attention paid to systematic IL development in primary schools. An exception was the small study reported here, which was conducted to find out more about whether and how primary schools use their libraries when seeking to develop the information skills of children (Streatfield, 2008). This research was intended to inform the provision of guidance and support material on IL and has not previously been published for a research or practitioner audience. The guidance and support material was intended to accompany website material

being made available to Primary headteachers and teachers aimed at stimulating work on reading development.

The consultation element with school headteachers or their nominees and with teachers and library assistants proved very useful in suggesting issues to be covered in designing the website materials, but the response to the survey was too limited to be reported here. Interview respondents were encouraged to describe what they did to encourage IL development in their children, whether and how the library fitted in and any problems or issues that they encountered in this work. Unlike the focus groups described below, all of these interviews were conducted in schools which were fairly active in this work.

The three structured focus groups were all part of larger events organised for teachers and library assistants. Participants were asked what happened in their schools in relation to development of study skills, library skills and problem-solving skills and whether and how their libraries were used in this work. They were asked to identify issues and problems in this work and to rate the importance of IL work and then how well they felt that their school performed in this work. The results of these interviews and the focus group discussions have been combined below.

All 45 respondents thought that IL work was very important *("More important than ever"* or *"How to teach research skills is more and more important – it will dominate their lives")* and most thought that libraries offered a focus for such work (*"Libraries should be part of problem-solving").* As one teacher said, *"There is no point in having a library to go in twice a week to choose fiction."* However, even though the focus groups were skewed in favour of library use (since their schools subscribed to the SLS and sent people to participate in their library planning sessions), 21people felt that their school was doing nothing or very little on IL. On the other hand, 15 people felt that their school was doing a fair amount, involving some groups from time-to-time and five felt that their school was doing more systematic work in this area; four support librarians were not sufficiently involved in teaching and learning to judge how much IL work was going on.

A sense of the variety in approach can be gleaned from specific accounts of what schools are doing. Two schools set IL targets for a term ahead (and another *"had a whole school focus on library skills last year")*: one target for the then current term was 'Finding information in a non-information book'. Elsewhere, one school offers library skills sessions each afternoon, covering each class once per week, on themes such as use the library, alphabetical skills, and using non-fiction books. Another school runs sessions on fiction, non-fiction and using contents lists. Elsewhere, a Literacy Co-ordinator was trying to introduce formal sessions on using books. Five other schools reported variations on systematic year-by-year skills development starting in Reception with how to look after a book and progressing through to more complex issues (e.g. in Year 4: myths and facts; deciding what we need to find out and how; scanning and locating information; in Year 5 - use the Dewey System). Some children are (or were) taught research skills in the local public library by children's library staff. Several schools used activity sheets focussed around skills in the library. One middle school conducted note taking work in the library.

In one area, various participants said that some schools were moving towards the International Primary Curriculum. As a result, research skills become very prominent *("but it is a lot easier to find what you want using laptops")* and children are taught dictionary skills. One teacher commented that *"We have a nice library, but it doesn't really have any books; it doesn't compare to the Internet."* Another IPC school teacher differentiated between the areas of IL that are taught – *"Study skills are integrated into IPC and also problem-solving skills, but not library skills. We need to address this."*

Several schools reported an emphasis on computer-oriented skills *("Teachers spend more time teaching Google.")* but five schools said that children are encouraged to use the Internet (and get support in searching) in the IT suite rather than using the library.

IL work at primary level is frequently centred around collections of topic/project books on a chosen theme borrowed from the SLS: these are usually kept in the classroom, but are sometimes put in the library deliberately to enhance the library stock in supporting project work, and children are then brought there to use them In several schools, the library staff assemble topic books for the teacher but these are then used in the classroom. Elsewhere children and teachers choose topic books together for the next topic (and even choose topics jointly) in a deliberate attempt to make selection less teacher-led. This is because, *"The teacher choosing materials for a topic collection doesn't encourage independent learning - it's just there."*

One teacher felt that *"Project collections are quite controlling; they don't give children the freedom to make mistakes, to learn from their own research and to go off at tangents and find links between different areas."* She wanted to find a way to exploit topic collections *"based on how children get information using the Internet."* Another added that *"The dearth of books is frustrating because children love this way of learning and we hit a brick wall, so the motivation isn't there."* Even within such controlling limits, the topic-based approach only works well if the available resources are adequate. In one school, *"we have parents who come in for every class at some time during the week. Children can choose three reading books or topic books; whatever they like, but if they want to choose topic books there usually aren't any there."* Another school reported *"a bit of a fight over topic books."*

How is the library space used in primary IL work? Children in several of the schools go to the library and work on tasks (usually in small groups). In other schools, when children are working on a topic they go to the library, look for information, take the book back to the classroom and put information on a worksheet. Elsewhere children go into the library at fixed times during the week. More strategically, two headteachers commented favourably on schemes of work, which are seen as helpful to teachers in providing a school-wide focus on IL issues. 12 schools reported that they take advantage of SLS visits to obtain advice and guidance around IL work.

IL work in primary schools is not necessarily library-focused. One school has positioned its IT suite next to the library: children are encouraged to look up information in the IT suite and then use books in the library, backed up by information sheets on how to use the library. In several schools, children use the IT suite rather than the library for information-seeking. Other teachers resort to book corners in classrooms (fiction and non-fiction), with the stock changed regularly. One school uses the school hall as an extension of the library for library skills lessons in Year 6.

The main problem signalled in the focus groups and interviews is the lack of curriculum time, which is seen as inhibiting IL work. Even when time is allocated in the timetable it tends to be sacrificed if there is pressure of other work to be completed. Participants felt that it would help if materials to use in literacy sessions could be made available. One teacher warned, however, that *"there is a danger of IL activity getting a bit contrived; we should not be doing it for its own sake."*

At one focus group there was debate about the perceived unpreparedness of secondary school children to use libraries and to do effective e-searching. They saw a role for primary schools in addressing this issue but *"this would need a little more time."*

The interview respondents offered views about the impact of IT. It was generally agreed that IT has already brought big changes in how children obtain and use information and that

these changes look likely to continue, with further decline in the use of books to find information. Some respondents are intrigued by the capacity for social networking through Web 2.0, which is seen as likely to lead children to rely on other children to get the information they need for homework or projects. (Interestingly, most respondents saw this as a problem for secondary schools rather than primary).

All interview respondents felt that school libraries offer a way into the world of information that should become more important as children go on through secondary and higher education, but many thought that teachers may not be clear about how best to use the library to develop skills. Immediate problems are that many school libraries don't have enough books and other resources to enable children to use them as a resource in doing projects and assignments. This problem is likely to get worse: the recent UK survey of 651 primary school libraries (Streatfield et al., 2010) shows that most primary school library budgets are declining, with almost half the library budgets for stock and resources stuck at last year's level; and almost a third being cut, some from a very low base.

 headteachers and teachers suggested that the way to get a school-wide approach to IL is to start a discussion at a staff meeting, covering what sorts of children they want to send on into secondary education in a world increasingly dominated by e-information.

4. Surveys of secondary, independent, middle and special schools in the UK

We now turn our attention to post-primary education. The remainder of this article is based on the first major surveys of UK school libraries and what librarians do since Helen Pain's overview conducted more than twenty years ago (Pain, 1987). (The size and scope of the survey reported here is described in '2.1 Surveying the field'.)

We asked questions about how school librarians manage their service and how they are managed, what they do to promote reading for pleasure within the school, whether and how they actively support teaching and learning, how they engage with ICT and the Internet in their work and what they regard as their most important role, before rounding off the survey by asking people to share a story or incident that illustrates the relationship between the library and the school. We will confine ourselves mainly to the IL dimension of school library work below.

In reviewing the replies to our survey questions below, we usually chose to compare the responses of professionally-qualified school librarians (including those with dual library and education qualifications) with those of two other groups of respondents (teachers in charge of libraries and other people with an academic qualification other than in education; and people with no higher education qualification). Coincidentally, if the second and third categories are combined, which we do with tables 1 and 2 below, the total number of respondents in these two categories was identical at 522 each.

4.1 From information skills to information literacy revisited

The last decade has seen a gradual shift amongst academic librarians, at least in their own professional discourse, away from discussion of information skills and towards more broadly encompassing terms such as problem-solving skills or information literacy (Streatfield and Markless, 2007). We were interested to see what terms are now used in schools to focus on this area of work. We asked respondents what term, if any, was used to describe information literacy work in the school. A range of terms was offered as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Preferred term for information work with students

	Qualified Librarians	%	All others	%	Total	%
Information literacy	153	29.3	94	18.0	247	23.7
Information skills	103	19.7	55	10.5	158	15.1
Library skills	47	9.0	75	14.4	122	11.7
Research skills	38	7.3	54	10.3	92	8.8
Study skills	44	8.4	36	6.9	80	7.7
Other	25	4.8	17	3.3	42	4.0
No particular expression used/don't know	82	15.7	118	22.6	200	19.2
No response	30	5.7	73	14.0	103	9.9

These responses confirm that 'information literacy' (reported by 29% of professionally qualified librarians, including those with dual qualifications) has taken over from 'information skills' (reported by 20% of these) in the past few years as the preferred term used in schools to describe the skills and abilities that students need to develop to locate, obtain, evaluate and exploit information in all its forms. Terms such as 'library skills' (favoured by 17% of unqualified librarians), 'research skills' and 'study skills' are more familiar to teachers but are less comprehensive in their scope. A variety of other terms was reported (shown as 'other' in table 1), including 'independent learning' (10 respondents), 'learning to learn' (5), 'learning skills' (3) and 'problem-solving' (2), or *"One school phrase that should encompass all these is 'Building Learning Power'".* 10% of respondents failed to reply to this question and two of the unqualified librarians confused information literacy with literacy programmes/classes.

Several librarians (again grouped within 'other' in table 1) reported that they chose their language to suit the circumstances, knowing that using teachers' preferred vocabulary could help in communication, *"some understand information literacy, others research skills or information skills".* Other respondents saw the use of terms as evolving, *"We use 'learning skills' to encompass all of these - but this may change as collaborative teaching in the library develops".*

4.2 Being strategic

Some indication of aspiration beyond the operational level is given by whether policy and development documents are in place. 61% of the qualified librarians (including those with dual qualifications in education and librarianship) had an active library policy in place that had been approved by the school Senior Leadership Team or governors and was used to guide the library strategy, including the IL work. This compared with 49% from all the other categories.

Policies are all very well but what about action? 59% of the qualified librarians had a formally approved library development plan in place, usually linked to the school improvement plan and being used to drive the development of the library. This compared with 41% of 'unqualified' staff. The relationship between IL and planning is explored further below.

Another indicator of whether a strategic approach to the work is being adopted is the extent to which library staff evaluate what they do proactively. For the most part, they still relied upon collecting and reporting 'busy-ness statistics', with 76% of qualified librarians adopting this approach compared with 63% of the other categories of library manager. Almost a third of all the qualified librarians (33%) conducted user satisfaction surveys of students and/or staff and 36% systematically recorded and reported success stories, compared with 22% and 23% of the other categories. At a more challenging level, 19% of all the qualified librarians conducted and reported on self-evaluation compared with 14% of the others.

The other dimension that we explored with all respondents was the quality of feedback about performance received by school librarians. 39% had access to the senior leadership team on request (57% of these were qualified librarians) and 2% were members of this team. The same proportion (39%) had received positive general feedback from senior managers and 31% had received public recognition for specific achievements. Some of the librarians waxed lyrical about the enthusiastic support received from the headteacher and senior management but others qualified their statements, usually by distinguishing between good support around discipline and less enthusiasm for library development. By contrast, 34% of respondents reported various levels of inconsistent support or indifference from senior management, ranging from being largely ignored (29%) to receiving negative feedback.

4.3 Engaging with the main school activities

School librarians can contribute to the school in many ways, but important amongst these is direct involvement in teaching and learning through IL development, promotion of reading for pleasure, and other means. They can help too by directly supporting teachers, contributing to the literacy drive and providing resource access (and increasingly, e-access) for students. The survey results show that, on the whole, the more proactive school librarians operated across all these fronts, although a few did appear to take on IL as their main role. It is important to remember that the IL work that we will consider below is usually taken on alongside this other work and that the library has to be organised and managed so that any of this work can happen.

In what other ways do library staff engage directly with teaching and learning support? Apart from their IL work described below, the main focus here is on assembling appropriate resources for teachers to use in their subject teaching, but some library staff are more proactive in anticipating needs by obtaining schemes of work from teachers or their departments. Smaller numbers of library staff went further in providing systematic proactive support by engaging in curriculum planning activities alongside teachers, conducting curriculum mapping, running CPD sessions for teachers on available resources, or other means. Increasingly, school librarians are also getting involved in exploiting the school Intranet, virtual learning environment (VLE) or Learning Platform as a student learning resource.

School librarians have many other roles of course, from liaising with teachers or exploiting ICT and Internet access to information, to deploying resources to support teaching and learning or basic organi sation of the library and its environment. However, when we asked everyone what they thought was the most important aspect of their role as librarian, the two most frequently mentioned activities were promoting reading for pleasure (picked as the most important activity or one of several by 39% of respondents) and developing IL work in the school (seen as most important or jointly so by 25%). More than twice as many of the qualified librarians chose IL work than did other categories of respondent (33% compared to 16%).

4.4 Information literacy (IL) work with students

When it comes to targeting efforts, the relatively easy option in IL work is to concentrate on students in their first year or two years when problems and issues around information are most evident, or on sixth formers who may be more receptive to ideas about effective researching and presentation of information. However, it has long been advocated that effective IL work should be addressed progressively through the years at school (see for example, Kinnell, 1992; chapter 7 in Streatfield & Markless, 1994), which offers a much bigger challenge and demands collaboration from teachers and senior management support. Where did the survey respondents focus?

Table 2: Focus of IL work on students through the years

	Qualified Librarians	%	All others	%	Total	%
Work with one/ two years	243	46.6	176	33.7	419	40.1
Work with most years	88	16.9	71	13.6	159	15.2
Work with all years	47	9.0	61	11.7	108	10.3
Focus on progression through the years	43	8.2	30	5.7	73	7.0
No reply	101	19.3	184	35.2	285	27.3

More than 80% of the professionally qualified school librarians reported a clear focus in their IL work (with almost half choosing to concentrate on one or two academic years); by contrast more than a third of the 'others' category were inactive or did not identify any focus. Many librarians are gradually expanding their efforts in this area. One qualified librarian explained:

> I am currently working with most year groups but the aim is for me to develop progression through the years and build it in to schemes of work. I teach an information literacy course to all Year 7 students in ICT lessons in an ICT room as a starting point. I am hoping to use the Personal Learning and Thinking Skills strand, along with the whole school policy on information literacy I have already put in place, to develop this further.

Clearly, to focus on IL progression through the years constitutes a major challenge for most schools and is well beyond the capacities of the school librarian alone. (We will comment further on collaborative work between librarians and teachers below.)

IL work may be important but how actively do library staff get involved? Unsurprisingly, a substantially higher proportion of graduates (91%) and qualified librarians (87%) engage with this work in the school than do the 'unqualified' librarians (66%). (This difference becomes more marked when the IL contributions are examined more closely below.) Several of the library staff reported that they were no longer allowed to get involved or had no opportunity to do so. There may be some 'traditional' teaching-focused (rather than learning-focused) schools where IL work by library staff is not appropriate and there are some library staff who are not willing or able to do IL work.

Is there any relationship between being generally strategic in managing the library, as discussed earlier, and how people engage with IL? We looked at two particular dimensions here: how well the librarian was assimilated within the school management, as shown by the supervision arrangements in place, and whether the librarian had produced and embedded a school policy or (especially) a library development plan. In both cases we looked at the relationship between this feature and IL work in the school.

Turning first to supervision of the school librarian: 39% of the respondents reported to the headteacher or Deputy headteacher and 21% to an Assistant headteacher. 65% of all the qualified librarians reported at these levels, compared with 55% of other categories of library manager. 14% of respondents reported to another member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), usually one with an area of curriculum responsibility, but 10% reported to the Bursar, Finance Director or Business Manager, which is likely to weaken the librarian's scope for engaging with curriculum matters. (Interestingly, several people reported to a Deputy or Assistant headteacher on curriculum-related matters and to the Bursar for administration.)

Senior management supervision is clearly a contributory factor in IL work. 81% of those librarians who reported that they were most ambitious in offering IL activity to most or all student years, or who were working on IL progression through the years, reported to the headteacher, or a Deputy or Assistant headteacher or to another member of the senior leadership team.[1] By contrast, only 66% of librarians who were not actively pursuing IL reported to a member of the senior leadership team. More tellingly, 54% of the first group of librarians reported to the highest school management levels (headteacher or Deputy) compared with 34% of those who were not active in IL work.

Is there an association between school library planning and active IL working? Here we identified the librarians who had created a library policy or (especially) a library development plan, had it officially adopted by senior management and often by the school governors and ensured that it linked to the school improvement plan. Next, we found that IL was being pursued progressively through the years, or was being worked on with all or most years in 63% of these schools.) This contrasted markedly with the schools where the librarian was not active in IL work but was involved in generating library development plans and embedding them in the School Improvement plan – only 35% of schools.

What types of IL work do librarians undertake? As can be seen in Table 3, qualified librarians and graduates (including teachers) were consistently more frequently involved in all aspects of IL delivery than the other categories of librarian, notably in conducting lessons in the library (reported by 67% of qualified librarians, 62% of graduates and 40% of the other groups), supporting teacher lessons in the library (65% of qualified librarians, 66% of graduates and 45% of others) and preparing guides for students (55%, 51% and 33%).

Table 3: Types of information literacy activity undertaken by library staff

	Qualified Librarians	%	Teachers/ Graduates (n = 123)	%	Others (n = 399)	%	Total	%
Student induction	403	77.2	91	74.1	253	63.4	747	71.6
Conduct lessons in library	350	67.0	76	61.8	159	39.8	585	56.0
Conduct lessons in classroom	70	13.4	12	9.8	20	5.0	102	9.8
Support teacher lessons in library	337	64.6	81	65.9	181	45.4	599	57.4
Support teacher lessons in classroom	77	14.8	21	17.1	36	9.0	134	12.8
Prepare guides for students	289	55.4	63	51.2	132	33.1	484	46.4
Prepare materials for teachers	142	27.2	26	21.1	92	23.1	260	24.9
Provide on-line tutorials	50	9.6	3	2.4	14	3.5	67	6.4

4.5 Aspects of information literacy covered by library staff

Which parts of the IL cycle do the library staff concentrate upon and is the focus of the different categories of library staff consistent across these areas? The responses are summarised and presented by category of librarian in Table 4.

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[1] For this comparison, librarians who reported to the bursar or finance manager were excluded because, although they were usually part of the Senior Leadership Team, they were not usually involved in curriculum activity.

Table 4: Main focus of IL contribution of library staff

	Qualified Librarians	%	Teachers/ Graduates n= 123	%	Others n = 399	%	Total	%
Find Information	370	70.9	80	65.0	194	48.6	644	61.7
Select Information	303	58.0	66	53.7	157	39.3	526	50.4
Evaluate Information	235	45.0	37	30.1	103	25.8	375	35.9
Make sense	187	35.8	32	26.0	98	24.6	317	30.4
Answer Questions	191	36.6	30	24.4	107	26.8	328	31.4
Solve problems	155	29.7	26	21.1	90	22.6	271	26.0

If we compare the three groups in relation to each phase in the IL cycle, the difference in focus becomes clearer. 71% of qualified and dual-qualified librarians focused on finding information compared with 65% of teachers and other graduates and 49% of the others; 58% of the qualified librarians focused on selecting information, compared with 54% and 39% of the other two categories. The difference becomes more marked again in relation to evaluating information (45%, compared to 30% and 26%); the extremes then narrow slightly when the focus turns to making sense of information (36%, compared to 26% and 25%), using information to answer questions (37%, compared to 24% and 27%) and using information to solve problems (30%, compared to 21% and 23%). A complication here is that other answers suggest that some of the unqualified librarians concentrate on answering questions and solving problems for their students rather than supporting them in doing so themselves.

Commentators on education librarianship have increasingly pointed to the tendency of librarians to focus their IL efforts on those aspects that are most familiar to them (information seeking and selecting) rather than the more challenging aspects of evaluating and making sense of information to answer questions and solve problems. The replies from all respondents shown here tend to confirm this emphasis, which may prove to be misapplied if the promised ICT advances in locating and assessing information are achieved in the next few years.

A few respondents made it clear that they saw all of their efforts holistically as a campaign to encourage students to think for themselves:

> "It is vital that students learn how to think for themselves, so many library activities are geared towards methods of encouraging this skill, using all the resources available to me, including information literacy, collaborative learning and web 2.0 materials. It requires a lot of teaching and collaboration with teaching staff. While this is not specifically mentioned on my job description, I believe it is fundamental to my role."

A few librarians reported that they could no longer get involved in IL work because of senior management changes leading to a shift in the school focus, diminution in their role as librarian or other changes. One qualified librarian was no longer involved because:

> "We only have four 75 minute lessons a day now, so there doesn't seem to be any time in the curriculum. I used to be involved via GNVQ in teaching these skills but they are no longer taught. I suspect that these skills are not taught anywhere in the school now. Changes in timetable and syllabi have pushed out these skills and the library is not seen as having any role in relation to them."

4.6 Collaboration with teachers

Library staff are most likely to be effective in developing IL work in the school (as well as reading promotion and various forms of curriculum support) if they collaborate with teachers, because otherwise the ratio of library staff numbers to students is very much against them. Collaboration will also help to bridge the gap in librarian understanding of current teaching issues (unless of course the librarians are also teachers). The need for a strategic approach to fostering collaboration is well illustrated by the following quote from a dual-qualified librarian:

> "I talk to teachers about teaching and learning, then, when I know their interests, I pass things their way and link them up with other teachers. I participate in academic meetings so I know the priorities and what people have to do. Most of my success comes from being proactive in supporting individual teachers and continuing to engage with them. Teachers are often isolated (not all departments are cohesive) and when in the classroom they are on their own. Collaboration depends on relationship building - trust, feeling safe, ways to bond, such as talking though commonalities of problems."

The extent and forms of collaboration undertaken are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Types of collaboration of library staff with teachers

	Qualified librarians	%	Teachers/ Graduates n = 123	%	All others n = 399	%	Total	%
Assemble materials for teachers	360	69.0	75	61.0	223	55.9	658	63.0
Joint planning of lessons	176	33.7	20	16.3	51	12.8	247	23.7
Joint delivery of lessons	219	42.0	33	26.8	68	17.0	320	30.7
Joint assessment of students	43	8.2	8	6.5	14	3.5	65	6.2
Joint review of lessons	61	11.7	6	4.9	20	5.0	87	8.3
Respond to teacher invitations	271	51.9	51	41.5	159	39.8	481	46.1

Professionally qualified librarians more frequently engaged with all of these activities than did the other groups of library staff. This difference was most notable with joint planning of lessons (34% compared to 16% and 13%), joint delivery of lessons (42% compared to 27% and 17%) and joint review of lessons (12% compared to 5%), as well as in assembling materials for teachers (69%, 61% and 56%).

This kind of collaboration does not occur without effort and it requires an opportunistic approach at least at the outset. A qualified librarian described her response to such an opportunity:

> "You have to be very pushy if you want to be included in planning. For example, Year 8 did a two-day racism-awareness event run by an outside organi sation. I was told what was happening and asked if they could use the library for part of it, but they had no awareness of the potential of the library so I inundated them with

> *lots of relevant photos and poems. This did develop into joint planning and they were pleased afterwards, but surprised at the time."*

The relative status and employment terms of teachers and librarians can be a stumbling block to development of collaborative working. A qualified librarian reported her salutary experience of joint working which involved:

> *"An IT year 8 project on astronomy – it was team taught, but died a death because the teacher assumed I would do half of the marking. I raised it with the union (I did not have an academic contract) - now I would play it differently, because it was an opportunity lost. This is one reason why librarians should be dually qualified."*

As noted earlier, some librarians choose to operate more strategically by engaging teachers with IL issues rather than working with individual teachers in lesson delivery. Several of the interview respondents reported that they provide staff INSET training on IL, Internet searching and Web 2.0, or target training at newly qualified teachers and trainee teachers – *"I open up questions about how students go about their learning."*

5. Three approaches to information literacy (IL) intervention in schools

Three broad categories of IL behaviour of librarians emerge from the activity survey findings outlined above. The behaviour of librarians can be characteri sed in three approaches, which we have labelled strategic orchestration, systematic development, and sporadic opportunism.

Approach 1: Sporadic opportunism

The librarian usually has no formal remit for IL intervention but takes whatever opportunities occur to help 'friendly' teachers with project work or to teach information sessions in the classroom or library, as well as to give advice to individual students. These interventions usually focus on finding and selecting information. This approach is typical in schools where there is no established tradition of IL work or where the librarian has little or no direct help in running the library. It is limited by the available time of the librarian and the willingness of individual teachers to solicit help. The approach is vulnerable to changes in school staff, attitudes or priorities

Approach 2: Systematic development

Here the librarian sets out to secure and sustain senior management support for an IL policy (usually linked to the school improvement plan) and to build alliances with interested teachers. The librarian has to show the school that s/he has an academic contribution to make to IL work (not just preparing materials for teachers and students). The usual approach at the outset is to seize early opportunities to work with 'friendly teachers' in order to show the school what the library can contribute ('early concrete practice' in the language of educational change management (see Fullan, 2007). The library contribution to IL is then targeted on particular years in the school (often commencing with the new annual intake of students and then extending the IL contribution to the other years over time, or starting with the sixth form and working down through the school). The library contribution often focuses on finding and selecting information but attention may also be given to other aspects of IL (see table 3). This approach can occur in any school with one or more interested senior managers and a dynamic librarian, especially if library support staff are available to free up the librarian from 'minding the library' to work with teachers and get involved in curriculum planning. The main limiting factor is lack of staff time but lack of interest amongst influential

teachers can also inhibit progress. The approach is vulnerable to changes in school priorities, the departure of key senior managers or changes in librarian.

Approach 3: Strategic orchestration
Here, the librarian is proactive in persuading senior managers and teachers to actively embrace IL work. The early focus is on advocating IL work amongst all teachers and encouraging teachers to take IL on board in their practice, with the librarian to the fore in planning this work (rather than pursuing IL independently as 'the librarian's curriculum'). The focus of the IL work across the school is likely to include all aspects of IL (see table 3). The librarian needs an understanding of how students learn as well as of managing educational change which in turn calls for a proactive and resolute approach as well as political nous. Such librarians are usually professionally qualified and may have dual education and library qualifications. Unlike approach 2, one or more interested senior managers will not be enough to sustain it without the headteacher's commitment. The success of this approach can be limited by teacher perceptions of the role of the librarian, who must be ready to take difficult prioriti sation decisions – which aspects of running the library will have to be jettisoned or done less well? This approach is particularly vulnerable to changes of headteacher but departure of the librarian should not derail the approach, since the school will seek to recruit another librarian committed to the approach.

6. Limitations of this survey
The survey findings reported here draw sufficiently upon a wide range of UK school library IL practice to form a basis from which to construct models of activity on the lines presented above as 'approaches'. However, since the survey was completed by school librarians who elected to do so when it was drawn to their attention by a network of school library support bodies (ranging from the Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals and School Library Association to various local authority Schools Library Services) the replies are inevitably skewed towards those who are most interested. For example, professionally-qualified librarians are heavily over-represented in the survey returns: it would be nice to think that half of all post-primary schools in the UK employ a professionally-qualified librarian but this is by no means the case.

In presenting the survey findings we chose to compare replies from professionally-qualified school librarians with those of other categories of school library manager. Although these may be found interesting, it is important to emphasise that the survey was not based on a random sample and all such comparisons should be treated with care. Although recognising that the survey results cannot be taken to statistically represent the range of school library activity, our main concern was to find out as much as possible about as many school libraries as we could within a very tight budget. This report should be read with these caveats in mind.

7. Conclusions

IL work in UK schools cannot be said to be in a good state. The survey results suggest that there is a wide and growing gap between the best practice and the rest, with most many libraries relatively under-resourced and senior management support ranging from visionary and enthusiastic through to neglect. It is hard to see how the overall situation can be much improved unless school libraries are recognised as a statutorily required service (which looks very unlikely in the near future).

The tendency for school library budgets at all levels from primary upwards to be shrinking should cause concern amongst people who are interested in education of children. To be effective and attractive, school libraries need to constantly renew their stock and invest in a range of resources, including Internet resources. This will become increasingly more difficult if budgets continue to decline, and that is clearly the trend at present.

It is apparent throughout the activities survey that professionally qualified school librarians make a difference. This difference is shown clearly in the review of IL development work, where it is apparent that a higher proportion of qualified librarians engage with IL, that they and their graduate colleagues are more directly and proactively involved in this work and that they again are more committed to collaborating with teachers to plan, deliver and review lessons. A follow-up survey based on a stratified random sample of respondents would however be required to show whether the differences emerging from the activity reports show more than that keen librarians who complete national surveys make a difference.

The three approaches to IL described above offer a potential way forward for schools seeking to develop their IL work. These three approaches can be seen as representing a progression towards implementing a school-wide strategy for IL. It is important to emphasise that such a developmental approach is not the only option. If the school is not wholly committed to IL development (and if the library does not have sufficient staff and resources to take on a greater challenge) then 'sporadic opportunism' or 'systematic development' may continue to be appropriate ways of working for the future. However, if the school wants to take on the challenge of moving towards 'systematic development' or aspires to embrace 'strategic orchestration', help can be gained from the school library self-evaluation materials referred to earlier (Markless & Streatfield, 2004). Although now somewhat dated, these publications are designed to help develop school libraries and should still be useful.

Resources

The full secondary, independent and special schools project report is available at www.cilip.org.uk/schools-survey.

Specifically, for **post-primary schools**, the support booklet accompanying *Improve your library: a self-evaluation process for secondary school libraries and learning resource centres* offers a way of evaluating how high the pupil IL standards are (p.9), descriptions of a typical school library at each of five levels in relation to IL (p.10), suggested actions for improvement, examples of good practice and sources of further advice. All of these can be found at:
http://tlfl.org.uk/englishdocuments/secondarystrategy/improvingreading/IMP/resources/downloads/assets/IRselfevaluationimprovelib.pdf

For **primary schools**, similar support and guidance can be found in pages 7-8 and 20-21 of the parallel primary school library self-evaluation publication (Streatfield &Markless, 2004) which can be found at:
https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/SLSEBP.pdf

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