

“The School Library–Public Library Laboratory”

Contents and results

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In 2005 the Diputació de Barcelona (Barcelona Provincial Council) set up a Laboratory to strengthen the collaboration between public libraries and school libraries at an suitable time for school libraries in our country, such is the interest in promoting them. The Laboratory's first phase has now concluded and the institutions involved in the public library and school library services have set up a second phase for the Laboratory, which is currently under way.

The presentation focuses on the results of the two phases of the “The School Library-Public Library Laboratory”, held in 2005 and 2006. The first Laboratory set out the framework for collaboration between public libraries and school libraries. The working sessions enabled consideration, discussion and analysis of the following questions: the model and functions of the school library within the framework of the school's educational project; the elements and resources necessary to carry out its functions; the framework for collaboration between the public library and the school library; the services and activities to be carried out jointly; and the steps to take to advance together towards a reading society that is empowered in the use of information.

The aim of the Laboratory's second phase is to consolidate the framework for collaboration between the public and the school library around three core areas: the consolidation of the areas and methods for collaboration between public and school libraries and the necessary resources; the drawing up of a working protocol for each method so as to facilitate its implementation; and to define the structure for collaboration between the various institutions and services involved by setting out the steps showing what the framework for long-term collaboration between the public and the school library should be like.

The structure of the document is the following one: Antecedents; Contents of the first Laboratory; Conclusions of the first Laboratory; and, finally, Contents of the second Laboratory and Areas of work.

Antecedents:

At the beginning of 2005 the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia) <http://www.gencat.net/educacio/> set up the "puntu" school library programme as a space for knowledge and learning aimed at promoting and consolidating the library's function as a fundamental instrument for

learning in all areas and in the promotion of reading. For more information: <<http://www.xtec.es/innovacio/ppt/biblioteques.ppt>>.

The Diputació de Barcelona, which heads the municipal network of public libraries in Barcelona <<http://www.diba.es/biblioteques/>>, appreciated the opportunities the new programme offered to improve the workings of public libraries and to collaborate in the development of school libraries by looking for ways to cooperate. To this end it proposed to the administrations involved (Education and Culture) that studies and analysis of possible methods of cooperation be carried out. A forum for debate was established, the school library-public library Laboratory, where the issue, based on the core areas described, was considered over the course of five sessions. These sessions were attended by people working in various professional fields: the school libraries of primary and secondary schools, the public libraries, teaching resources centres, the Faculty of Library Science and Documentation and staff from the regional and autonomous departments of education and culture.¹

The aim of the Laboratory was to bring the public library, more consolidated in our country and with a tradition of networking, closer to the incipient school library, very much in need of avenues of cooperation. From this perspective there was a need to design and plan the immediate future for relations between the two library services and to opt for a more wide-ranging and stable coordination given that, at the present time, cooperation between libraries occurs only from time to time and is often more the result of the good will of the staff than prior agreements or the aim of institutional support.

The working methodology consisted of each session focusing on an agenda proposed initially by the Laboratory coordinator² and on the discussion in the plenary sessions of texts submitted by the various working groups.

At the present time the second phase of the Laboratory is in progress³ and we shall refer to it later.

Contents of the first Laboratory

The Laboratory considered the models and good practices for the relationship between the school and public libraries, it presented examples of good practice and proposals for action as well as challenges and it did so always bearing in mind the possible contribution of the public libraries in helping the development of school libraries.

The Laboratory considered the following issues:

- Model and functions of the school library as part of the school's educational project
- Framework for collaboration between the public library and the school library
- Steps to take to progress together towards a reading society empowered in the use of information.

¹ For the make-up of the first Laboratory, see <<http://travesia.mcu.es/documentos/6>>. There were 14 participants.

² The director of the first laboratory was Montse Bundó from the Centre de Recursos Pedagògics d'Osona (Osona Teaching Resources Centre).

³ The Laboratory is headed by Montserrat Gabarró from the Centre de Recursos Pedagògics de Sant Andreu (Sant Andreu Teaching Resources Centre), Barcelona.

Below we present the issues that generated the most group debate together with the agreements reached in the various fields.

Model and Function of the school library

The school library is defined as a resource centre at the service of teaching and learning which carries out an essentially educational task. It provides access to all the information materials needed by the school to carry out its teaching role. The documentary collection must be organised centrally and be under the supervision of qualified staff. The library's activities must be fully integrated with the school's educational processes and form part of the school's educational project, curriculum and annual plan.

Such a library can be defined as an educational space with four fields of action that must be developed harmoniously within the school for the library to fulfil the functions laid down for it in international directives.

- As a centre for information
- As a centre for reading
- As a centre for learning
- As a centre for cultural stimulation

The school library must respond to the school's programme and its users: the students, the teaching staff and the educational community as a whole. The public library's services are directed towards the general public and must satisfy the information and cultural needs of a variety of different publics whose interests are much wider in scope.

The mixed library (school and public)

Starting from the principle that no library can substitute another, and that the response of libraries must be based on networking for each system and on the CITs, in some circumstances, such as rural areas, it may be possible to consider a shared model, the justification in such a case being that collaboration between libraries enables them to share and maximise resources.

Recognition was given to the importance of clearly defining the functions of the school library and those of the public library. While some of their functions overlap, the two kinds of library can be clearly distinguished by their collections and the information resources in their respective facilities as well as by the needs of their users. It is for this reason that each service must respond in accordance with the resources available based on networking and the information technologies (in the case of the public library, public reading system resources, for example).

There is a common denominator in the contributions concerning this matter: the services that need complementing through coordinated efforts and support, the existence of which in one, however, can not substitute their absence, or deficiency, in the other.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to establish a single model that is applicable in all municipalities and circumstances. In our territory as a whole there are many different circumstances, such as areas with towns and villages with small populations and areas with dispersed populations, where library services are deemed insufficient. Even in such cases it is

not considered desirable for one sort of library to assume the role of the other (double function). Other forms of providing access to the service need to be studied.

Staff

The debate about the profile of the person responsible for the school library was a very interesting one because of the variety of the participants' professional backgrounds. The discussion posed two sets of circumstances:

- **Primary education:** the person responsible for the school library or librarian should be a teacher with training in Library Science and the support of a specialist professional in the *Teaching Resource Centres in the* area for organising and promoting school libraries.
- **Secondary education:** the person responsible for the school library should be qualified in Library Science and as an educationalist. "Information and documentation" should be a subject for study and people qualified in it should form part of the teaching staff.

Forms of collaboration

At the present time collaboration between libraries is only occasional. To the extent that such collaboration forms part of the **aims plan** and to the extent that there is **institutional agreement**, such collaboration could become more permanent and widespread with pre-determined aims. This would improve some of the services currently provided by both kinds of library service and would have a positive influence on the drafting of plans to promote reading at the municipal level, amongst other things.

Collaboration between the two kinds of library could include the joint design of **services** and **activities** in various fields. The Laboratory considered a number of ways this might be done both with regard to services and/or activities.

Amongst the services to be developed jointly are: cooperative development of the collection, coordination of electronic services and computer networks, cooperation in the development of educational tools and user training, class-group visits to the public library and the promotion of reading.

Instruments to ensure collaboration

The *IFLA/UNESCO Directives for the school library* explain that a written agreement can help collaboration between the two services and that this agreement should include the following points:

- joint measures for cooperation
- specification and definition of the areas for cooperation
- specification of the financial implications and ways of sharing costs
- calendar for the period of cooperation

These should be included in an Annual Plan in which the aims are stated. It should also include timing, those involved, financial assessment and evaluation.

Role of the Teaching Resource Centres

In our country we have Teaching Resource Centres organised geographically. Their basic functions are the organisation and management of continuing training activities for teachers and the administration and distribution of resources. These functions are intended for educational centres and have the aim of improving the quality of education. The activities of the Teaching Resource Centres take place within specific geographical areas.

Together with the public libraries, the Teaching Resource Centres should constitute a more specialised nucleus for consultation and support in the fields both of education and of documentary technique.

Conclusions of the first Laboratory

The conclusions of the first Laboratory can be consulted at:
<<http://www.diba.es/biblioteques/novetats/llicitanovetats.asp#235>>.

Here we would like to mention six of the most notable of these conclusions.

Partially overlapping functions – a case for collaboration

Many of the functions of the school and the public library overlap: information, teaching and leisure. At the same time, however, they differ from each other in terms of aims, especially with regard to user needs, some of the services provided, facilities, the collection and documentary resources.

The school library has to respond to the school's educational programme and its users are therefore the students, teachers and the educational community as a whole. The services of the public library, on the other hand, are directed towards the general public and need to satisfy the information and cultural needs of different kinds of users with a much wider range of interests.

School library model

There is a need to conclude the definition of the new school library model being proposed: the school library a space for learning equipped with the latest material resources related to the world of information and the new technologies.

Need for an educational documentary network

In order for collaboration between the public and the school library to be effective, school libraries need to be deployed with a firm resolve and clear vision. The following challenges have been identified:

- The need to create centralised technical services to enable networking and provide services for all school libraries
- Part purchase of the centralised collection

- Resources for bibliographic selection
 - Resource cataloguing support
 - Single catalogue
 - Portal with information resources: there is a need to make progress towards a school library portal (created at the level of the administration in culture and education) with information resources organised according to thematic areas.
- School libraries organised by geographical areas to coincide with the Teaching Resource Centres. Support for the Teaching Resource Centres for territorial coordination.

Staff

The wealth of opportunities and quality provided by the library depend on the human resources available within and beyond the school library. It is consequently essential to be able to depend upon well-trained and motivated staff and in sufficient numbers for the size of the school and its requirements for library services.

Reading Plans

Part of the Laboratory's work focused on the importance and need for reading. In fact, in modern society, in the era of knowledge and information, people who can not comprehend a written text will be in an inferior position with regard to conditions and possibilities. Hence the importance of organising Plans to encourage reading in order to create readers capable of understanding, interpreting and enjoying a written text. Two ways of doing this were considered in depth. Their aims coincide but the agents are different.

- **School Reading Plan**, to be structured around three core areas:
 - **The promotion and encouragement of reading:** reading as leisure, reading for pleasure
 - **Computer skills empowerment:** the application of learning strategies to empower students in the use of information to acquire more knowledge.
 - **User training:** empowering students to use the library (both the school library and the public library)
- **Municipal Reading Plan** based on the joint responsibility of the agents involved with the aim of joining forces and guiding the implementation of the Plan throughout the territory with common, shared criteria. The implementation of the Plan is a clear example of the collaboration between the two kinds of library. The involvement of the Town Council is, in good part, the key to its success.

Commitments by the various levels of the Administration

There is a need to establish two levels of commitment for the development of the school library in our country, on the one hand, and to encourage collaboration between school and public libraries, on the other. The Laboratory drew up a specific document with specific proposals concerning the necessary commitments by the various levels of the Administration.

- For the development of school libraries
- To strengthen collaboration between school and public libraries

Contents of the second Laboratory. Areas of work

In October 2005, given the results of the first Laboratory, the organising institutions decided to proceed with a second Laboratory with the aim of specifying the framework for collaboration between both kinds of library. A working group was set up which attempted to maintain the cohesion of the previous group as far as possible⁴ to work along the same lines as the first Laboratory.

The aims of the second Laboratory centred around three core areas:

- 1 To specify the **areas and ways for collaboration** between the school and public libraries and the **resources** necessary, based on a knowledge of the areas of population (rural and urban), the schools, the educational services and the library services.

To this end, the areas for collaboration detailed in the following table were established with the aim of defining, for each area: possible actions, timing, necessary resources, responsibilities and evaluation indicators.

⁴ Some of the previous members of the Laboratory were replaced by: Enric Agudé (Biblioteca Xavier Amorós, Reus); Àlex Cosials (Xarxa Unesco. Barcelona) and Mati López (Àrea d'Educació, Diputació de Barcelona).

Table 1: Areas and ways of collaboration

INFORMATION AND SERVICE RESOURCES	CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL STIMULATION	STAFF TRAINING
Development of the collection	Encouraging reading / Empowerment in the use of information and research Programme of activities to encourage reading	Technical processes evaluation and training programmes: organisation of the collection, choice of documents...
Access to catalogues and services	Programme of user training activities	Teaching training and evaluation programmes for the various educational levels
	Programme of information access and use activities	
Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loan • distribution and marketing • activities • electronic library • on-line services • bibliographic selection • new titles • space use • etc. 	Programme of cultural stimulation activities	Devising teaching materials and tools
	Programme of activities for families and the educational community	
	Municipal reading plan	
	School visits	

- 2 To draw up a **work protocol** for each method in order to facilitate its implementation
- 3 To define the **structure for collaboration between the institutions and services** involved by means of guidelines to determine what the long-term collaboration between the school and public library should be like. At the present time no collaboration has been agreed and the aim is to make proposals for better coordination.

At the present time the working groups are actively involved in their work. During the presentation session we will be able to more details concerning the results of this second Laboratory, which is scheduled to conclude and publish its final papers in June. We are confident that this second Laboratory, which is of a more practical nature, will provide referents to stimulate collaboration between the two kinds of service to enable us to move on from the occasional collaboration that exists at present to a more permanent and established kind of collaboration.

Barcelona, May 2006

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