

## Collaboration with a Range of Communities for the Continuous Evolution of a School Library

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**Abstract:** *In a modern society overflowing with AI, building strong human connections and being a part of various communities as fellow citizens are essential to stimulate students' inquiring minds and to encourage them to read, think, and act on their own initiatives. We will share practical examples of this approach from our secondary school library which involve connections with public libraries, universities, alumni, local schools, publishing companies, bookstores, and international organizations.*

**Keywords:** *School & community collaboration, student library committee, student-led events in the library*

## Introduction and Literature Review

There is a fear that opportunities for people to communicate face-to-face are becoming limited due to development in AI, causing individuals to learn predominantly in digital spaces. In the age of information overload, false information is overflowing, and we only see what we want to see as algorithms on the internet put us in filter bubbles. In such a situation, interacting with various communities to broaden people's perspectives is becoming increasingly vital as the libraries' mission.



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As stipulated in the School Library Law in Japan, school libraries are basic facilities indispensable for school education, and their purpose is to collect, organize, and preserve library materials and make them available to students and teachers, thereby contributing to the development of the school curriculum and fostering the sound education of students (School Library Law Article 2) .

The school library has a function as a “reading center” that provides a place for reading activities and reading guidance for students, a function as a “learning center” that supports students' learning activities and enriches the contents of classes to deepen their understanding, and a function as an “information center” that meets the information needs of students and teachers, and develops students' ability to collect, select, and use information. In order to fulfill these three functions without regret, it is considered essential to actively engage in direct interactions with various communities (School library guideline Article 1).

## **Research Objectives**

In our modern world, where digitalization is accelerating, we think that building analogue face-to-face relationships with others is critical, and particularly important for secondary school students. Based on our ongoing practices at our school library, we would like to share our views on how school libraries should evolve, and the importance of school libraries in a digitized society to inspire fellow educators - especially librarians of secondary school libraries.

## **Methodology**

We will give actual examples of collaborations between our secondary school library and various communities in the presentation, including how they began, the details of the collaborations, and their benefits.

There are four groups of communities we collaborate with.

The first group is the local community, comprising public libraries, educational facilities, universities, and alumni, which allow us to gather a vast amount of information to support students' studies and essay writing. A system is in place whereby the teacher librarian requests materials related to the class theme from the local public library, and the public library librarian



selects and delivers the materials to our school. Our high school students are required to write a thesis on a theme of their choice, and the teacher librarians also serve as a bridge to appropriate universities and educational institutions for research and study at the request of the student. In addition, the library regularly hosts a writing center where graduates of the master's program or higher can consult individually with students on how to write academic papers. The support of the school's alumni organization has been really effective.

The second group is local schools including other secondary schools, the local international school and kindergarten. The student library committee creates opportunities for students and school librarians with diverse backgrounds to learn from each other. One of the exchanges sponsored by the school is one in which sister schools and local secondary schools are invited to our school, mainly using Bibliobattle, which is a book introduction communication game that originated in Japan. In Bibliobattle, the champion book is decided by voting to create a game-like atmosphere, but the post-game feedback session is conducted in a very friendly manner. The students were able to expand their reading genres and exchange information about their school life.

The third group is the community with companies. There are publishing companies, newspaper companies, and bookstores. With the recent decline in the number of people reading books and newspapers due to the widespread use of smartphones and social networking services, the publishing and newspaper industry and bookstores are facing a considerable crisis and are contemplating ways to promote reading and increasing their involvement with schools. For example, our high school students participate in a debate which discusses the best books, modelled after the Goncourt Prize. Other students take part in a book selection tour and exhibition event at a major bookstore. These collaborations enable students to get involved in promoting good books and therefore encourage them to read books with more care.

The last group is the international community. Our school is one of the UNESCO Associated Schools in Japan to seek sustainable development. Our library supports a student-led global event for SDGs (which is 17 International Goals for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015) consisting of meetings, presentations, workshops, competitions, and projects that connect students around the world. We host international book talk events and organize book fairs to raise UNESCO funds for children in Asia who do not have access to education, in order for them to learn how to read and write.



## **Discussion, Conclusion and Implications**

From our research, the participants will learn in detail how school libraries can help students communicate with various communities, and how we, as global citizens, can educate children to act on their own initiative and improve their problem-solving abilities. Our school library provides opportunities for students to benefit in a variety of ways by collaborating with various communities.

The following are what we have kept in mind in our efforts to date.

1. Have good communication with subject teachers and administrators to see if effective use of the library can be made in the classroom.
2. Create study groups for inquiry-based learning with teacher librarians from other schools, exchange opinions, and incorporate good points from other schools.
3. Respect students' independent planning and realize their ideas in the library as events and exhibits.
4. Take some action. A good chain of events will start, which will lead to the next one.
5. Present at international conferences. It also connects us to researchers around the world, and we gain a lot of knowledge.



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