Developing Students' Information Skills in Brazilian School Libraries: The Librarian's Role

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This exploratory study examined how school librarians in Brazil understand their role in developing students' information literacy and whether the notion of a formal program of information literacy informs their practice. The study data included published reports of librarians' practices as well as interviews and group discussions with 28 librarians, 14 of them from government schools and 14 from private schools, from nine different states. A qualitative, interpretative approach was used to analyze the study data. The results of the study show that the concept of information literacy, as a set of skills and attitudes to be developed through a planned, continuous and sequential library program was not found in the practice of these librarians. However, a significant range of skills and attitudes which contribute to make the library a place for learning was found. The study confirms that there is movement toward the practice of information literacy in Brazilian school libraries, but librarians still need to move further toward enacting the collective and permanent actions that characterize the concept of information literacy.

Introduction and Purpose

The concept of information literacy as a set of skills that people have to master in order to deal with the information systems characteristic of contemporary societies was embraced in the beginning of the 1980s by librarians in advanced countries and soon after it also aroused the interest of librarians in less developed countries.

The concept of information literacy was introduced in Brazil first by Caregnato (2000). Since then, other authors have explored the concept, mostly from the perspective of the international literature, identifying tendencies and seeking to understand the origin, meaning and importance of the concept (Campello, 2003b; Dudziak, 2003). Lecardelli and Prado (2006) examined the Brazilian literature on information literacy and recommended that researchers become familiar with related work being done in their own country

Some Brazilian authors have focused on information technology, emphasizing the need to develop information skills to allow the digital inclusion of citizens (Silva et al., 2005). Others have investigated whether a librarian's education fosters the development of that

librarian's own informational skills (Campello & Abreu, 2005). Implementing information literacy programs in basic education demands collective efforts involving not just the librarian, but also the entire school community (Gasque & Tescarolo, 2007); this suggests the need for school teachers to develop their information skills (Belluzzo, 2004). Other researchers emphasized the need to build a concept of information literacy for Brazil and, accordingly, they aimed to verify the presence of information skills in educational policy documents (Campello, 2006) and in assessment tools of basic education (Melo & Araújo, 2007).

In Brazil, the term "school librarian" means a professional librarian who works in basic education schools, educating students from ages 4-17. Librarians in Brazil are educated in university undergraduate programs. A prerequisite for admission to these programs is a high school diploma (completion of medium level schooling for ages 15-17 in the Brazilian educational system). In addition, candidates must take a written examination that verifies their knowledge of curricular subjects at this level (Portuguese, geography, history, mathematics, and so on). The examination results determine which students are selected; this is necessary because in most Brazilian universities there is an excess of candidates for university degrees. Graduates of Library Science programs are qualified to work in every kind of library because the content of the undergraduate program is basic. There is no specific program for school librarians, and those who choose to work in a school library will be dealing with students in basic education from kindergarten (ages 4-6), fundamental level (ages 7-14) to medium level (ages 15-17).

Professional librarians in Brazil realize their responsibility in the learning process, not only with regard to promoting reading--a traditional function of the librarian--but also concerning the development of information skills (Campello, 2003a). The concern of the school librarian with the research process, a learning strategy that provides good opportunity to teach information skills, can be seen in several studies conducted by Brazilian researchers in the field of library and information science (Fialho & Moura, 2005; Gasque & Tescarolo, 2007; Magalhães, 1992; Neves, 2000; Silva, 1997). These studies have shown various inadequacies in the way the process has been conducted in Brazilian schools: the research process does not occur in a way that will lead students to significant and independent learning and that will allow the development of information skills. The problems related to the research process in Brazilian schools can be summarized in relation to the teacher, the librarian, and the students involved in the research process.

Often the teacher sets the assignment with the sole purpose of teaching topics that could not be studied in the classroom for lack of time. The teacher has contradictory attitudes regarding the research process: while he/she feels the need to change the way it is conducted, he/she does not know what to do differently (for example, he/she suggests the students not copy parts of books, but does not develop strategies to prevent copying). Generally, there is not adequate guidance at any stage of the process, and the teacher often does not evaluate the final product, commonly a paper. Often the librarian behaves passively; he/she only locates and delivers the material to students and does not maintain contact with the teacher. The students manifest different feelings regarding the assignment: anguish, indifference, and lack of seriousness. They come to the library in

groups and show that they know little about what to do. Often they try to split the tasks--some students copy parts of texts, others seek the books on the shelves, and others are responsible for preparing the final version of the paper—as a result, they all fail to learn the process as a whole.

In summary, research as a learning strategy is not institutionalized in Brazilian schools, the library is not regarded as an environment that contributes to learning the research process, and the librarian is not well integrated into school life. Clearly, in order to include information literacy contents in the school curriculum, it is necessary to change the school culture and the conception of learning and to improve the training of teachers and the information infrastructure

The study reported in this paper was based, therefore, on the following assumptions:

1. Brazilian librarians understand their responsibility in the development of students' information skills;

2. Educational policies in the country recommend the implementation of constructivist methods of learning and stimulate the development of skills to use information;

3. Librarians realize that the concept of information literacy can help to provide a foundation for their actions;

4. In some Brazilian schools which have already implemented a constructivist approach to learning and have good libraries, librarians are working directly with students, conducting information literacy activities.

The research aimed at clarifying the following questions: Are Brazilian school librarians aware of the skills they teach students? What are these skills? Do librarians understand their role in developing students' information literacy? Is the notion of a formal program of information literacy present in the librarians' practice? The research questions were addressed from the standpoint of the librarians, trying to understand what they intended to achieve through their pedagogical action and what information skills they were really teaching. This understanding will help to build a notion of information literacy more consistent with the reality of the country.

This article is part of an extensive research made for my doctoral dissertation (Campello, 2009) that sought to understand educational practices of Brazilian school librarians, to examine to what extent they were developing information literacy activities and to verify what was the areas of expertise or the limits of competence of the librarian at school. In the original study I worked with five categories: (1) what theoretical notions support librarians educational role; (2) what are the objectives they try to achieve through the activities that involve students; (3) what are the skills they try to teach; (4) how do they interact with the school community; and (5) how do they evaluate their work. In this article I addressed the third of the above categories, that is, what information skills librarians develop or try to develop in the students.

This article reports an initial exploratory study that involved only librarians who are working with students, that is, developing an educational role. The notions expressed by the librarians who participated in this investigation may be representative of Brazilian

librarians in the same situation. This small-scale qualitative investigation was a first step to make librarians' educational role more visible and suggests the need for more extensive and structured studies.

Literature Review

According to Kuhlthau (1987), the teaching of information skills in school libraries has evolved from three models or approaches: a source approach, a pathfinder approach and a process approach. In the source approach, the aim is to help students to use the library and its resources by improving their location skills. The pathfinder approach leads students through a sequence of sources, helping them to understand the relationship among them. The process approach goes beyond source use and location skills, involving using, interpreting and finding meaning in information. Information literacy education comprises a process approach; it involves planned work, with systematic and sequential activities, involving not only the librarian, but also teachers and other members of the school team. The goal is the development of skills and therefore the focus is the student learning process, which leads to the need for targeted evaluative processes to assess learning. A formal information literacy program demands strategies of collective learning, thus involving groups of students, and not only individual assistance.

The chart below summarizes the changes that the implementation of information literacy programs will require:

Sporadic activities	→	planned/systematic and sequential activities
Developed by the librarian	→	developed in collaboration with teachers
Focus on activities	→	focus on skills
Informal assessment	→	formal assessment
Individual assistance	→	collective strategies (with classes)

The literature on information literacy, in most cases, has approached the topic from a library perspective. However, some authors have called attention to the interdisciplinary aspect of the concept and suggested that it should be addressed in the context of literacy in general. Kuhlthau (1989), for instance, mentioned the relationship between information literacy and reading, as she asked:

> What does it mean to be literate in an information society? Information literacy is closely tied to functional literacy. It involves the ability to read and use information essential for everyday life. It also involves recognizing an information need and seeking information to make informed decisions. Information literacy requires the abilities to manage complex masses of information generated by computers and mass media, and to learn throughout life as technical and social changes demand new skills and knowledge. (Kuhlthau, 1989, cited Behrens, 1994, p. 313)

Langford (1998) further developed the idea of literacy as a *continuum*, arguing that the concept evolved as society's need for knowledge changed, acquiring different facets that, at present, are closely linked to the use of information technology. She stated that if information literacy is not seen by educators as a natural part of teaching practices in general and if it is handled by librarians as something isolated from the classroom, it is unlikely that it will be incorporated as a practice in schools. Thus, according to Langford, information literacy discourse should eliminate the jargon, and librarians should seek

common goals with educators since librarians are not the only ones interested in learning through information. The concept of literacy as a *continuum* should be privileged, and information activities should be incorporated naturally into learning strategies and not included as just another "topic" in the school curriculum.

Some authors have suggested that, instead of discussing the formal concepts of information literacy and the techniques to best transmit skills, practitioners should reflect on their practices, taking into consideration the context of information, including production, use and recontextualization (Pawley, 2003). According to Pawley, we must understand that uses and users of information (or texts and readers) cannot be treated as "groups to be manipulated and re-formed, but as discourse communities and communities of practices" (pp. 10-11), that is, communities that are able to produce information, not only consume it. The teaching of information skills should, therefore, be planned based on the real needs of communities, groups and individuals.

Information literacy must be understood and handled from the perspective of its application in concrete situations. Unlike the techniques and tools used by librarians in the task of organizing information--which have universal characteristics--the strategies for implementation of information literacy programs are much more influenced by the context. Each program is unique and thus the need to bring it ever closer to the context in which it is implemented. This is the rationale for this study: enabling a better understanding of information literacy in a concrete perspective and showing whether Brazilian school librarians are aware of the skills they teach students.

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative research study, using methods that are appropriate to examining the complexity of human interactions (Maylone, 1998). Qualitative research involves understanding and interpretation informed by the researcher's experience. The researcher does not keep separate from what he observes; he/she is not neutral; he/she is influenced by his/her preferences, interests and principles and, therefore, subjectivity must be recognized in qualitative research (Williamson, 2006).

All choices made for this study were certainly influenced by my engagement in two fields of knowledge: library science and education. I believe the library profession has a particular contribution to make to society. I understand the library as a social construction established on the basis of the value that society has historically attributed to learning, knowledge and the preservation of messages collected by those who preceded us (Maylone, 1998). I believe also that the process of literacy, necessary for the use of our cultural heritage, should be constructed in a collective and inclusive environment and that the librarian can contribute significantly to that process. As a teacher influenced by constructivist theories, I believe there is a way of learning that can benefit from the process of searching and using information that takes place in an environment with an abundance of information, typical of a good library. This vision of the library--not as physical space, but as an opportunity to connect ideas which provides significant learning--permeates this study and is made explicit because in qualitative research "you can not escape the ties of subjectivism and the historicity; the understanding of the social world is conditioned by

the history and culture of the researcher, for its participation in this world" (Sutton, 1993, p. 414).

In an attempt to achieve a description that reflects the experience (Sutton, 1993), data were collected from the librarians, that is, the agents of the practice under examination, trying to understand the meaning they ascribed to this practice, from the experience, representations and concepts they formed during their professional life. I assume that the individuals who share a profession also, to some degree, share constructions of reality that are passed on to other individuals through the process of socialization (Bradley, 1993; Williamson, 2005).

Through the data collection process, I sought to hear the librarians in three different ways. The first method was through written descriptions of their practices, that is, reports published as articles in periodicals and conference papers. Since the focus of the study was the librarians' practices (and considering the size of the country) I began by examining means the written descriptions of these practices. In this stage I analyzed 20 documents (mainly conference papers).

As a relatively stable discursive genre, these reports provided fairly uniform data, revealing ideas expressed by the librarians through spontaneous language, important for the interpretation. These documents were selected from LIBES, the Brazilian Literature on School Library database, which comprises approximately 400 citations of documents from 1960 to date. The documents for my study were chosen according to the following criteria: they had to be about experiences effectively implemented and they also had to mention the results obtained from the implementation of the projects. Twenty documents produced by 18 informants were analyzed. The number of reports selected from the years of publication were: 1991, 1 report; 1999, 6 reports; 2003, 1 report; 2004, 2 reports; 2005, 3 reports; 2006, 4 reports; and 2007, 3 reports.

A comprehensive study of these documents was made. The document analyses provided a general idea about the librarians' practices but there was a need for a more detailed picture of those practices. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a purposeful sample of librarians who were engaged in working with students, deliberately chosen based on the researcher's long contact with the field (Bradley, 1993) according to the wealth of information they could offer (Williamson, 2005). Initially, five librarians were interviewed: three from government schools and two from private schools. The interviews, carried on from March to November 2006, were recorded and then transcribed.

As the understanding of the object of study increased, the need to collect additional data was evident. In order to supplement and validate data obtained in the documents and interviews, a group discussion was held in November 2006, with the participation of five more librarians: three from private schools and two from government schools. They were selected according to the same criteria used to select those for the interviews.

The group discussion allowed the exploration of new issues, benefiting from the flexibility of qualitative methodology, in which the research problem is continuously defined and delimited by the exploration of the research context. It provided an opportunity to enlarge the sample, exposing different voices and visions (Williamson, 2005). The interaction between the five participants of the discussion group gave room for

descriptions, at times detailed ones, of different aspects of their practices, triggering reactions that helped to understand certain practices that were common to all and others that were exclusively used by some. The group discussion, which lasted about one hour and a half, was recorded and then transcribed.

In summary, this study collected data from three sources: published reports of practice, semi-structured individual interviews, and one group discussion. The study data were collected from 28 librarians, 14 of them from government schools and 14 from private schools, from across the five Brazilian regions: North (one librarian), Northeast (one librarian), Central West (one librarian), Southeast (21 librarians), South (4 librarians). The concentration in the Southeast and South regions (25 librarians) is explained by the fact these two regions are the most developed and have most of the school libraries in the country.

Table 1: Distribution of School Libraries by Region

Southeast	40.9%
South	24.7%
Northeast	22.2%
Central West	6.4 %
North	5.8%

Source: 2004 Educational Census, Ministry of Education, Brazil

Findings and Discussion

Hearing from these librarians about their practices made it possible to understand the limits and possibilities of their role since, through their language, they produce meanings as members of a particular community. Analyzing their speech as participants of a specific practice, I was able to apprehend the ways through which librarians describe their reality and thus collectively conceive their pedagogical role (Cornelius, 1996).

The study data showed that the development of information skills was not the main focus in the practice of librarians. Their predominant actions were directed toward bringing members of the school community into the library and developing in them a taste for reading. In the interviews, the vigor and detail with which the participants described the activities they designed to promote the library, books and reading contrasted with their descriptions of other aspects, such as the skills they sought to develop in students, the evaluation of learning and the concepts they used to ground their practices, notions present in the concept of information literacy.

The emphasis on activities was clear: descriptions of what they *did*--their actual practice--were fluent, made with ease, while issues involving more abstract approaches to practice resulted in hesitant answers. The skills they hoped students to learn through their actions were described in a vague and fragmented way. One participant said: "Speaking about skills really is a little difficult; we are getting there, but I think more is still needed".

Nevertheless it was possible to identify various skills that informants sought to develop in students. In the written reports, generic skills such as "intellectual development

of the individual" and "students growth within the academic environment of the library" were mentioned. Six reports referred to critical ability, without, however, defining the concept, as can be seen in the following quotes: "to develop critical vision," "to enable and encourage criticality," "personal and collective critical development," "to develop critical sense and ability of judgment," "development of critical thinking," and "to educate critical, reflective and search oriented readers."

Attitudes

Two reports mentioned attitudes that were considered important for students to develop: the habit of using information, of searching for information, of using the library and the taste for reading. Two reports included skills to improve group work: the students would learn to listen and discover the value of working in groups when participating in library activities.

Participants referred to attitudes of social responsibility specifically related to the library. Six informants said they taught behaviors such as keeping silent, not running and not bringing food into the library. Students were taught that the library is a public space and that all users must be respected. By discussing library regulations, students learned to understand rules and limits. Acknowledging the role of parents in reinforcing the attitudes that she wanted to instill in students, one librarian made the students take the library regulations to their homes.

The librarians expressed a commitment toward developing attitudes of responsibility on the collective use of the library and, at the same time, ensuring the cordial behavior of users. For example, to understand the need to return the borrowed book because other users might need it was the goal of the Day of Forgiveness, when readers with late books were reminded of the importance of returning books by the due date. Another strategy was to reward the responsible user: students who returned books in due time received certificates from the principal and small gifts from the librarian.

Attitudes of respect toward the book itself were the concern of several participants who used different strategies to achieve their goals. One was to give students a small bag in which to carry home the borrowed books, emphasizing also for parents the importance of caring for those objects. Another reported strategy was a play performed by the students and directed by the librarian, stressing the need to care for books. An exhibit of damaged books followed by a discussion with students, a visit to a book repair laboratory, campaigns and participation in activities of restoration of books in the library were strategies also used.

Activities to teach users to value the book as an object are necessary because of the precariousness of collections in many Brazilian libraries; damage to books may result in managerial and financial problems since there is no guarantee that new copies will be purchased.

Literature Activities

The great involvement of librarians in the promotion of reading leads them to develop many activities with fiction books. The study data showed that librarians taught attitudes and skills through fiction books. Three categories of knowledge that librarians hoped students to develop through literary reading were identified. The first was related to personal values. In this case, the goal of reading activities described by six librarians was to develop "creativity," "sensitivity," "imagination," "self esteem," "identity and self-knowledge," "personal and group identification," and "understanding of their own feelings and behavior." The second category was related to ethical values: "learn moral values," "human values: respect, dialogue, solidarity and justice," "develop discernment," and "value voluntary action" were mentioned by three participants, constituting what Lajolo (1997, p. 66) considers "feelings, concepts, attitudes and behaviors that the school is responsible to instill in students."

The third category of capabilities that librarians wanted to develop through fiction books was language improvement; it was mentioned by three participants, in a generic way ("improving the language," "develop the level of spoken and written language," "reading and writing effectively," "expanding the knowledge of formal language") or in some detail ("enrichment of vocabulary," "ease of expression," "developing the skill to [engage in] argument").

Other abilities acquired through reading activities were mentioned by three participants: "capacity of attention," "gradual acceptance of long texts," "to understand the difference between media (book and video)," and "to know parts of the book".

Research Skills

The number of activities reported for teaching research skills was much smaller, compared to activities aimed at promoting the library and reading.

The specificity of the library organization required that students learned to move in that space and acquire autonomy to use it. Several reports referred to the need to make the library a familiar space to the user. Three reports mentioned the ability in a generic way ("to know the library and its collection," "familiarity with the space," "to understand the organization of the library"). Five participants were more specific and said they taught students "to know the rules and loan procedures," "to learn how to find books on shelves," "to know the location of the collections," "to know the different library materials," "to understand the function of the call number." Students were led to see the school library as a model for other libraries: familiarity with it would be useful in the future, when using other types of library, was mentioned in two reports.

When teaching how to use the library, the librarian was a *lecturer*, as mentioned by Kuhlthau (1996, p. 145), that is, the role of the librarian when he/she brings students together, usually the incoming ones, to give them instructions about the location of library materials. Kuhlthau criticized that role by saying: "The tendency to tell everything once and for all is an easy trap for the Lecturer, frequently overwhelming students with an abundance of new and unconnected facts and directions" (Kuhlthau, 1996, p. 145), something which was recognized by one of the interviewees, who said:

In fact, we work so that students are increasingly independent within the library. So we explain about the information sources; first we give them instructions where they can seek materials in the library. To 5th graders I will explain that the book has a call number, how that is made up. I also explain what is Cutter, although they will forget it. Then we go to the computer and I show how the material can be located, and we then go to the stacks. And are they autonomous? Some are, others are not; it will always depend.

Use of information sources was a skill often mentioned. Participants knew that this was necessary for students to carry on their research assignments, and seven participants said they taught how to use dictionaries, encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, atlases, phone directories, biographies, almanacs, and guides. The Internet as a source of information was a concern for two participants. One of them said:

Increasingly for some time it is becoming very common for students of all ages, grades and levels to use the Internet for their assignments. The problem is that they copy and paste everything, texts and illustrations. Then they only have to print and prepare a cover sheet. Often students do not even read their papers. Does this kind of assignment help to build students' knowledge? What is the concept of a research assignment?

Another librarian told about the same difficulty, because students insisted on using the Net. Teachers, in turn, would not accept assignments researched only through the Internet. Then rules were settled: the Internet was only used when no material on the subject was available in the library. In this case, specific websites were recommended by the librarian.

Regarding the practice of librarians in teaching information sources, there is a pattern similar to what Stripling (1996, p. 633-634) called *focus on collection* ("the librarian might teach students about relevant sources") and what Kuhlthau (1996, p. 11) named the *tool or source approach*, which "centers on aiding students to use their particular library and its specific sources by improving their location skills." It was possible to note the *tool or source approach* by observing the terms used by participants to refer to the objectives of their practice of teaching information sources. They would teach students how to "handle the sources," "become familiar with library materials," "provide examples of sources," "consult sources," or "become familiar with the resources."

Only one interviewee used a more contextual approach in the practice of teaching information sources, relating the use of the source to the research process, teaching the use of resources alongside the development of a project carried out with teachers and closer to what Kuhlthau (1996b, p. 11) called the *pathfinder approach*, "designed to lead students through a sequence of sources in a search to help them to understand the relationship among the sources in the library."

Skills to structure the research paper and to use bibliographic standards were mentioned by five participants. They reported that they taught students the parts that make up the paper (introduction, development, conclusion, annexes, references) and how to prepare abstracts and citations, to take notes, and to prepare an oral presentation. Participants stressed that teachers should be aware of these techniques, because they are the ones who set the requirements and evaluate the assignment. One interviewee

mentioned how she tried to teach students the importance of quoting the sources they used:

> when they write their papers they do not include the sources they used. So I say: 'you must have the bibliographic references, even if you used the Internet. Someone has written that; who wrote this material?', they will just write Google, and then I say: 'No, Google is where you searched, where you found the information, but within Google there is another address, there is a reference to someone who wrote the material you used.'

Regarding the skills of library use and the research process, it seems that the librarians were restricted to the *instructor* and *tutor* roles. According to Kuhlthau (1996, p. 149-150), in these roles there is no intervention at the level of interpreting information, which involves more elaborate processes of thought. The practice of librarians occurs predominantly in what Kuhlthau named *location*, which deals with operational, external aspects, such as teaching how to find and handle sources, to organize the research paper and eventually proposing a step-by-step strategy to guide the task.

The study data showed that the librarians were deeply aware that their accomplishments could not suffice without the teacher. They understood the need to work together and, realizing the teacher has characteristics of a difficult/incidental user, would try hard to involve him/her in library projects. Perceiving the need for partnership with teachers is an important step towards the implementation of information literacy programs.

The data also indicated that some librarians have held collective actions involving entire classes of students. Examples of these actions are story telling, which took place in various libraries and, less often, talks on library use and on organization and standardization of research papers. Although sometimes using collective learning strategies that are similar to those of teachers, the librarians' practice was still more focused on individual assistance.

Conclusions and Implications

From this study, we may conclude that the concept of information literacy, as a set of skills/attitudes to be developed through a planned, continuous and sequential library program, was not found in the practice of the participants. The research evidenced the gap between the practices developed in Brazilian libraries and the concept of information literacy as reported in the literature.

When asked during the interviews what skills they teach students, librarians were clearly hesitant. In the reports, the skills that librarians proposed to develop through their projects were very generic and consisted of attitudes especially difficult to be evaluated.

However, as a whole, data showed a significant range of skills and attitudes librarians intended to teach, which makes the library a place of learning. The concern with the research process showed that some informants understood their responsibility to guide, to facilitate, together with the teacher, and that they tried to help students overcome the failures and shortcomings of the process. It was clear, thus, that the librarians wanted to make the library a unique place for learning, distinct from the classroom.

Although not having a formal and systematic sense of the skills they teach, librarians did make the library an environment for learning by using various specific strategies. This practice usually involved contact with the individual user, a library tradition formalized in the reference service, according to Grogan (1995, p. 2), which considers the reference service as a "personal assistance provided by the librarian to readers in search of information." At the same time, there was a tendency toward collective action, and some librarians worked with entire classes of students, which can be seen as a step in the direction of a more inclusive learning approach.

The data on librarians' performance in regard to the research process supported the assumption that there is an incipient action toward the practice of information literacy. School librarians in Brazil are engaged in activities that reveal they feel responsible to help people learn from the information they gather, to search for information correctly, to become autonomous learners, but they still need to go forward to systematize and enact collective and permanent actions that characterize the concept of information literacy.

The librarians' central concern with reading became clear. Incidentally, this is also an issue that has mobilized educators and been the core of Brazilian educational policies that try to find ways to improve children's and young people's reading skills. It is perfectly understandable then that librarians are wiling to take active part in this effort, with their distinctive contribution. Emphasis on books and on reading indicates that-- when considering that reading skills are a basic condition for information literacy--the practice of Brazilian librarians is on a level below information literacy. The study data indicate that librarians invest greatly in developing in potential readers the pleasure of reading. They should now worry about the pleasure of learning.

From the situation examined, it is appropriate to suggest that the academic community and researchers in LIS and in education can provide substantive contributions to the debate on information literacy in Brazil if they deal with specific issues about the reality of the country, seeking to build notions of information literacy that really help to strengthen the educational role of the librarian in Brazilian schools.

In observing the librarians' point of view about their practices, this study showed one angle of the issue. It is desirable to expand this focus, including the standpoints of students, teachers and principals, allowing for a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of the school library, which will sustain more firmly the necessary political actions in search for better conditions for Brazilian school libraries.

The effort made in this study to reveal and systematize the librarians' contribution to students learning may stimulate reflections on librarians' educational role that can lead to the improvement of this role, concerning especially school librarians' education.

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