The Social Inclusion Function of the School Library

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This article presents arguments to support social inclusion as an important function of the school library. Unlike other types of libraries, the school library is not a separate organization, but lives within the school, which has social inclusion as its mission. In order for the school library to fulfill a social inclusion role in cooperation with the school, it must look at the changes that are underway in education systems because of the process of globalization and digitalization of information. Two changes in particular—the movement from the transmission of knowledge to the formation of key competences or capabilities and the growing weight of international evaluations of educational systems—are effecting a paradigm change for schools and school libraries: from the axis of having information knowledge to the axis of being and becoming competent and capable. The school library has the potential to be an essential driver of social inclusion and educational innovation by playing a unique educational role in two areas: the logical organization of information, which can help to address scholastic dispersion (the dropout problem), and the documentation of professional knowledge to help the school become a learning organization (knowledge management).

The School Library and Social Inclusion

At the beginning of this millennium, Europe launched the Lisbon Strategy, an ambitious program that dealt with themes of social inclusion and lifelong learning. The Lisbon Strategy had among various objectives over a period of 10 years from 2000 to 2010: (a) to reduce scholastic dispersion (school drop-outs) to levels of below 5%; (b) to raise the mean school attendance level bringing at least 80% of 18-year-olds to the higher secondary school diploma; and (c) to reintroduce at least 30% of the adult population into the education system for employment and full citizenship. This ambitious European program, which is still far from complete, has more than a local significance. Its universal significance was not only in seeing the development of knowledge as the main driver of economic development, but also in proposing that the economy of knowledge (where capital formation is above all the formation of human capital) could join two logics that have often been presented in history as separate, if not opposite: the logic of development and the logic of cohesion or social inclusion.

It is from this perspective that one must look at the role of the school library because more than any other type of library, it is called to a role of social inclusion. This is because the school library, unlike other types of
libraries, is not an independent or separate organization, but is part of a larger whole that lives in an institution, the school, which has had and always will have social inclusion as its mission.

In other libraries, the user can be considered as self-evident, an assumption to whom it is surely necessary to dedicate policies of attention, but who can in some way be considered taken for granted because of past consolidated habits and traditions in a certain territory. Users of the school library are instead people who are constructing their story and their habits and for whom the past means nothing: only the future that they will be able to construct will count. In the school library, the user is in fact just a hypothesis, a "problem" for whom a "solution" must be found. The student is not naturally an active user of the school library. He or she can and must become an active user but is not one a priori. The student’s becoming an active user is in fact a finishing line, an objective to attain, both in the sense that he or she should be both formed and transformed from being a non-user into a habitual user, and in the sense of being transformed from an inexperienced user into an expert one, into an active person. It is in this formative-transformative action in this social inclusion process where an individual is given the tools to pursue active citizenship in order to realize fully his or her personality that is the main reason for the school library to be in the school. That is, the school library’s reason for being is that it can cooperate with the school of which it is part in the construction of an “autonomous lifelong learner.”

However, what does this mean in practical or operational terms? The school library has offered various answers to this question over the years. At first, because the school library was considered a “Cinderella” of the library system, attempts were made to reduce the differences between it and its “older sisters” rather than developing its specific differences. Although this was the correct and necessary direction to take at that time, it is not sufficient today to avoid the risk of a possible marginalization of the school library. Some of the typical activities of the school library, for example, promoting reading and developing information literacy, if not continually updated in the light of changes underway in schools today, expose the school library to great risk. Instead of the school library being perceived by the school as the essential laboratory that “makes the difference,” it could easily be threatened by other powerful competitors. If the school library is to carry out a social inclusion role in cooperation with the school, it is essential to look at the changes underway in education systems.

Changes Underway in Education Systems
at an International Level

Today education-formation is universally recognized as being a key factor in economic development that can contribute to social cohesion. The educational policies of various governments, although oriented in varying ways, some more to the left and some more to the right (e.g., in Europe the Lisbon strategy; in the United States the No child left behind program), con-
verge at least as far as their intentions are concerned, in indicating that strengthening the general level of education-formation is both the driver of development and a powerful tool for social integration.

Nowadays, however, above all because of the developments in technology of the information society (the Internet, the digitalization of information, television, and so forth), it is not certain that formal education-formation—that is, the school—still retains the monopoly on the performance of this important economic-social function. The educational and formative agencies that can compete with the school are increasing every day. The media competition is increasing, and increasingly other agencies are often more effective at engaging students than the school. The school as an institution is increasingly subject to less self-evident legitimation. Each teacher in each class must somehow regain this legitimation. And this must be done while motivating students to learn, knowing how to balance the new information and knowledge with the pre-knowledge and experience of the pupils, knowing how to show the meaning and use of what is learned, and so forth. If formal education cannot be depended on to re-elaborate experience and knowledge obtained from informal education, the school and its knowledge risk being considered only as self-referential: something unconnected to everyday problems. Thus there is risk of increasing the naïve, ingenuous vision of dis-intermediation, that of home schooling, of the individualistic use of the ipod with which the student downloads the audio-video files from Internet about the subjects to be learned. There is a risk of being deluded into thinking that it is possible to manage without the mediation function of the school. The school above all, as far as adolescents are concerned, is exposed to the risk of being considered a residual, secondary place dedicated fundamentally to teaching secondary socialization, that is, one goes to school not to learn, but to make friends and to find a girlfriend or boyfriend.

The school is experiencing the following contradiction. On the one hand, it works in a favorable context where the economic and social functions of education and formation are extolled, whereas on the other hand, this same valuing of knowledge makes other agencies take part in and reorganize the traditional cultural and social role.

In this context—and rich in possibilities and risks—important changes and initiatives that are underway at a global level both for the knowledge economy and for educational systems deserve mention. Two in particular are the movement from transmission of knowledge to fostering competences and the growing weight of international evaluations of educational systems.

From the Transmission of Knowledge to the Formation of Competences and Capabilities

A well-known philosopher who is an expert on educational problems worldwide, Edgar Morin (1999), indicated that “a well made head” rather than “a well filled head” is the task of a school that wishes to accept the
challenges posed by information societies, particularly that of information overload. Unlike a Babel of languages and the parcelling of knowledge, according to Morin, it is necessary to work toward a culture that holistically knows how to integrate, establish relationships, and synthesize.

Government policies (e.g., the Development and Selection of Competencies or DE.SE.CO project), economic operators interested in educational processes (e.g., the MILE project), and international specialized literature (e.g., EURYDICE, which deals with competence portfolios) are moving in the same direction. The increasing importance of the concept of competence can be witnessed in these spheres. The term competence is complex and polysemous. Originating from the world of work, it has sometimes developed a restrictively purely utilitarian concept. Competence is not simply executive ability: it is rather what can be considered close to capability, to knowing how to use the knowledge obtained to face the frequently unknown and unforeseeable problems of life, something more about knowing how to be rather than knowing or knowing how to do.

In fact the school is a space-time that is inadequate for transmitting all the knowledge that an individual needs today. Formal education systems can no longer consider themselves as institutions that transmit a closed and definite body of knowledge from generation to generation. They should instead consider themselves institutions that form students because the final purpose of the school is that of starting students on a route to being capable of self-formation throughout their entire lives.

The Increasing Relevance of Comparative Evaluations of Educational Systems

In recent years, thanks to globalization, we have seen another innovation that is gradually acquiring increased importance in education, that is, those international investigations that compare educational systems. These evaluations offer directions to be considered by all who work in schools and also by those who work in school libraries. The best-known comparative investigation is the Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development’s Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD PISA), which now involves over 50 participating countries (see http://www.pisa.oecd.org/).

Investigations such as PISA take place in a globalization context with the agreement of the most economically relevant countries in the world, that is, those whose internal production represents almost 90% of the world’s Gross Domestic Product. These countries know that the international weight of the results of these investigations has increased and that the results can affect their future prosperity. The findings of these investigations are subject not only to public debate at the national level, but are also a factor that influences allocation of investments by multinational organizations. To have or not to have a literate reading and mathematical work force can in fact raise or lower the infrastructural costs of investments.
Investigations such as PISA do not deal with evaluations of knowledge, but rather with comparative evaluations of competences, of how people know how to use knowledge to solve everyday problems. These evaluations form part of an international trend in assessments to evaluate not the knowledge that a person has, but rather the person’s capacity to make use of this knowledge when necessary to face the various requirements of life. The educational problem where formal education is invested in the globalized information society is not only that of guaranteeing access to information, but rather that of evaluating and comparing whether and how a school knows how to form students who know how to understand, re-elaborate, digest, and use this information.

How is this relevant to a school library? A school library that proposes as its main purpose to operate as an efficient means of access to information, no matter how valid and pertinent the information is, would risk doing something that is necessary but not adequate. Focusing only on providing access to information is certainly not adequate for a school that is today asked to move the barycenter from having information and knowledge to being competent and capable. As libraries in recent years have moved from the axis of possession to the axis of access, so have educational systems shifted their paradigm from the axis of having information-knowledge to that of becoming competent-capable.

Naturally, these processes are characterized by continual stops and starts, and as they are not without contradictions, they are not deterministically on the home stretch. In fact they require actors who share the final purposes and synergies that support them. The school library and the school librarian by cooperating actively with the school, can support these processes, and in fact they can be one of the main drivers that favor fulfillment of the goal of supporting students being-becoming competent-capable. However, this is a choice that implies a review, a reinterpretation, an enlargement of the function of the school library. These changes are reflected in the new stage of the school library guidelines at the international level. Moreover, it is part of the logic of the guidelines to consider changes that are underway and to attempt to adapt to them, promote them, or even anticipate them.

Changes in International Guidelines in Recent Years

The roles of the school library and of the school librarian vary from educational system to system. No single model of the school library exists, and neither does a single model of the relationship between the school library and the school. Twelve years ago in the 1995 IFLA guidelines on competences for school librarians, Hannesdottir (1995) reminded us that at least three ideal models for the school librarian could legitimately exist—a specialized teacher, a specialized librarian, or a separate professional-type school librarian—and that each type required its own individual training program.
However, the changes created by the Internet, the development of OPACs and metaOPACs, the digitization of information, the phenomenon of information overload, and economic and cultural globalization have transformed the world of the library such that today, and even more so tomorrow, the destiny and the future reason for existence of the school library and the school librarian will depend on finding answers to some common global challenges. Probably the elements in common in the globalized world of information will tend to weigh more than before on local elements of diversification. The production of guidelines is, moreover, an expression of an objective process of unification, comparison, and sometimes even of confirmation or ratification at an international level, which is today subject to a great extent to globalization processes. All types of libraries, from those of conservation to those of public reading, have been obliged, willingly or unwillingly, to rethink their potential, to redefine their mission, their duties, and their services to the user, to define precisely their identity, and also to redefine their reciprocal relationships.

The school library is also subject to these changes. Until some years ago, before the Internet, guidelines stated that a school library should aspire to be something like a public library. It should aim to be a public library physically located in a school. Being like a public library could have been an ambitious goal. It was not by chance that at the beginning of the 1990s, the IFLA guidelines on school libraries (Carroll, 1990) suggested that the school library get out of its “Cinderella” condition in the library system and become as similar as possible to its “older sisters,” in particular the public library. These guidelines defined the minimum necessary conditions for a school library to be a real library. The emphasis was above all on the noun library and less on the adjective school. The 1990 guidelines indicated how many and which resources the school library should have in relation to the number of students, how many and which infrastructures, how many and which spaces, and how many and which specialized personnel were needed so that the library not be a simple collection of books or a storeroom, but a real library. Today we see that this ambitious goal has become just the starting point. Today the logic of possession has given way to the logic of access. More than physically owning collections, it is fundamental to have access to information. Many school libraries, especially those that have had to rely on limited financial resources, can take part in library networks, using interlibrary loan and document delivery rather than acquiring all their own resources. The latest IFLA guidelines (Saertre & Willars, 2002), unlike those of a few years before, move the emphasis from being to doing, from how a school library should be to what a school library should know how to do. The 2002 guidelines compared with the guidelines of a few years before represent a real paradigm shift: a change that reflects the digitization and globalization processes of information that have forced the focus to be moved from identity-structure to function, from have-being to doing.
If the school library does not wish to be marginal and optional but rather an essential part of the school, it cannot limit itself to aspiring to be like its older sister the public library. To limit itself thus would risk a precarious future. This is also true of the school librarian. Either the school librarian has the professional capacity to be seen and perceived by the school, by the school administrator, and by the teachers as a person who participates in the formation process, or he or she will risk not only his or her personal destiny, but also compromise the possibility of the school library of carrying out its potential role as driver of innovation.

If the school library limits itself to being an imitation of a public library physically placed in the school, the school may quite easily decide to do without the school library and instead take advantage of one or more external public libraries rather than sacrifice space, time, and money. If the service offered by the school library is no different from that of an efficient public library, why might a school administrator not decide to concentrate the few available resources on external collaboration?

The situation is quite different when a school library wishes to and knows how to construct its own distinctive identity and become a significant space for the school. This is not so much because it has either a small or large collection, but because activities take place here that are congruent with the goals of the school as it is and as it is called to be because of the changes required of it at an international level. The situation is also different when the school library wishes not only to be at the service of the school, but also one of the main drivers of its innovation. Together with the laboratory-classroom where knowledge is transmitted and acquired, the school library wishes to be the laboratory-library where competences are formed. As a laboratory-library, it does not want to be just a time-space in a physical sense, but rather a methodological space, a time-space where more involving, efficient, and lasting learning modes are experienced because the student, as an individual and as part of a group (cooperative learning, peer tutoring, problem-based learning, etc.), learns the knowledge of the disciplines starting from problems and from experiences lived and perceived as concrete and significant.

The situation is, therefore, different when the school library wishes to be a time-space where the learner not only has access to information, but learns to form competences, personally to take responsibility for constructing his or her own identity and culture as he or she is not given to do in the auditorium classroom where the protagonist is the teacher who transmits knowledge in face-to-face lessons. The situation is also different when the school librarian, knowing how to take part in conversations with school administrators and teachers who are sensitive to the innovations that today are requested by educational systems to help them carry out the double function of both development and social inclusion, wishes to participate and test the library to see how it can make the difference in the school where it operates and to ask the school to be evaluated for this, its added value.
If this is the strategic mission the school library wishes to take on—to be integrated with a school directed toward forming competences to accomplish its social inclusion mission and as a consequence to be a driver of the innovation processes of the school—then it is necessary to reinterpret some of its duties and above all to add new ones and boost others, for example, reading literacy and information literacy.

How to Change Reading Literacy and Information Literacy

Reading Literacy

Over the years, the promotion of reading, in particular the promotion of the desire to read or the pleasure of reading, has been a trend into which the school library has put much effort in the wake of Pennac’s (1996) famous decalogue, *The Reader’s Bill of Rights* (http://everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=1510428). There has been a great deal of positive experience in promoting reading, above all in the primary school. However, is all this sufficient? What difference is there from this point of view between a school library and a public library that also activates policies of this type?

In a school, the problem of reading cannot be limited to concern about the pleasure of reading. It is necessary to be concerned about reading literacy, about the ability to read and understand information and texts. The school needs to form readers who are competent, capable readers. In the school, reading is a central and important theme: it is the duty of everybody, of all the teachers in all the subjects. It would indeed be a serious mistake to reduce reading to a professional problem that only the literature teacher and/or school librarian have to try to resolve. The theme of reading is the problem of restitution of the meaning of information. It is not only a problem of reading the printed page. It is the problem of understanding information by whatever means it is transmitted: text, audio, and/or audiovideo. To fight for social inclusion means facing the crucial point of ensuring that all can be successful in reading.

The challenge of reading literacy is surely an educational problem that today cannot be solved without considering what international comparative investigations request and test among the various educational systems. The reading literacy with which the international investigations deal (OECD PISA type for 15-year-olds, but also PIRLS for 9-year-olds) is to understand and reflect on information and texts starting from the definition of aims and requirements in concrete situations. Reading literacy is thus being able to respond to requirements and aims that are self-determined by the person (practical-operative, cognitive, emotional) who can cope with various types of texts, from what OECD PISA defines as “continual texts” (such as descriptive, narrative, expository, instructive, argumentative texts, etc.) to texts defined as discontinuous (such as lists, graphics, diagrams, maps, etc.).

If the school library wishes to have social inclusion as its aim, if it wishes to cooperate with the school in guaranteeing the full practice of citizenship, these international investigations require that students develop
comprehension (i.e., to use the text to gain information for personal purposes). First they must grasp an overall idea, focus on parts of the text, establish relationships between the various parts, and make inferences.

**Information Literacy**

In recent years, school librarians who have worked in the direction of the library as a laboratory used to develop the ability to carry out research have paid attention to information literacy. However, everyone deals with information literacy to some extent, from the school library to the university library to the public library, but should they all deal with information literacy in the same way?

In the school, information literacy has been considered an activity to be carried out in the school library. Whereas reading activities can be carried out in anywhere, the research activities foreseen by information literacy require a specific place where it is possible to have access to many information sources. In the library-laboratory space, it is possible to form these specific abilities, which include knowing how to gain access and how to use information expertly in order to make decisions, solve problems, or satisfy needs. Various information literacy models exist, but they involve attention to research as a process and not as a product.

Work in information literacy involves the formation of competences and implies that the teacher, together with the school librarian, should know how to activate a complex formation process of the competences based fundamentally on problem-based learning. The teacher and the school librarian should work together to develop a mediation process between the subject of the study that has to be made problematic (e.g., through techniques such as cognitive conflict) and the knowledge requirements, the pre-knowledge, and the experience of the student.

In the school, information literacy activities have another shape and perhaps a greater complexity than those seen in a public or university library. A more complex educational mediation takes place among the varying items of information that have to be learned, and also the student is under formation. The school has the institutional duty of helping learners adopt a less naïve and more critical approach to the information, including what circulates on the Internet.

If information literacy is to become widespread in the school as a learning practice, it is necessary to go beyond the methodological level that often characterizes it when librarians talk about information in abstract and general terms and not about information in a specific disciplinary context. Information literacy can be diffused throughout the school and among the teachers if they can imagine its development in the various disciplinary spheres. Using information to do methodological courses in which tools for the critical evaluation of information are offered—reliability, authoritative-ness, pertinence, value in terms of accuracy and uniqueness, and so forth—should be considered only as a starting point. The more a school
librarian knows how to work and talk with teachers, the more information literacy activities can address the various epistemologies with which information is organized in the various disciplines. This is more than the problem-solution model frequently used in the dominant information literacy models. It is not only a research model that starts from a clear definition of the problem to arrive at a clear solution. For some disciplines, for some types of topic, the information literacy research path can instead start from a non-problem and arrive at the awareness of a problem. In other cases, it can be productive to carry out research with information literacy activities starting from the solution and going backward to arrive at the problem from which the solution was derived. In short, information literacy, which today is popular in all types of libraries, should be developed in the school taking into consideration educational specificity if one wishes the school library to have a social inclusion function. The school library can also have an essential role in carrying out other activities in the school if it wishes to cooperate with the school in social inclusion.

The Logical Organization of Information and its Educational Function

If the school library wishes to cooperate with the school in social inclusion, it can contribute to the battle against scholastic dispersion (the drop-out problem), which is one of the objectives of the Lisbon strategy. Scholastic dispersion has many causes and many forms. Among these its correlation to the dispersion of information should also be counted.

Students who drop out are often those who do not have essential cognitive and meta-cognitive tools, who do not have the competences to organize information logically and thus transform it into knowledge that can be used when necessary. Obviously more than one reason is responsible for the dispersion of information. Often there is a lack of motivation toward a certain type of information; often new information does not blend with previous information and so remains meaningless, and so forth. Among the various reasons, however, is the fact that students who drop out (although not they alone) have been found to lack the metacognitive competences with which to organize information logically. In other words, a correlation exists between scholastic dispersion and information dispersion. In this framework, the professional knowledge of those who construct catalogues, who deal with the logical organization of information, could and should be seen as providing transdisciplinary knowledge of high cognitive and metacognitive value. However, this professional knowledge, far from being performed as a separate activity only by the school librarian, can and should be understood as an educational activity that can involve both the teachers and the students.

Where should we start with this work, which can be considered an in-depth aspect of information literacy? The following example might suffice in this context. If we think of the prevalent ways that inexperienced students look for information in a school library, we would notice that in most
cases when the students act on their own initiative without having been guided by the teacher, they do not look for information in a catalogue of authors or titles. Because they are not expert researchers, they do not yet know what or whom to look for. On the contrary, they ask questions on meanings, on subject catalogues, on the classification system, and on thesaurus indexes. It is, therefore, in this area—the meanings and relationships between meanings—that it is possible and opportune for the school librarian to work. The work of semantic cataloguing is a cognitive activity close to the teaching activity of constructing conceptual maps. The construction of catalogues can be thought of like the construction of compasses: to navigate the sea of information, to learn how to abstract and synthesise to reduce many items of information to a unit; to put main and secondary concepts in a hierarchy; to trace a particular meaning back to a more general class; to construct relationships of superordination, subordination, and equivalence relationships. The school has known for some time that the more information to which one has access is isolated and without correlations with other information, the more it is subject to dispersion. In this sense, the professional work of semantic cataloguing by the school librarian could and should become a formation-of-competences job, especially if the school librarian knows how to construct cooperation (co-presence, co-teaching) with the teacher of the subject and also works with the teacher in the production of subject micro-thesauruses.

I mention above Edgar Morin (1999), who in his book *A well made head* encouraged the school to come to terms with information overload. This was not through a useless expansion of disciplinary notions to be transmitted through increasingly heavier school books, but through a vision capable of selecting and establishing relationships among meanings. This is an educational and formative function where the school librarian can perform a function that in some way is essentially unique and provides a driver of innovation in the school that wishes to fight scholastic dispersion.

The School as a Learning Organization and the Role of the School Library in Documentation of Best Practices

Among the various changes underway at an international level, comparative investigations among the various educational systems are growing in importance. This has had and will probably continue to have a significant effect on the school. The findings of these investigations can open action spaces to the school library and school librarian on the condition, however, that school librarians boost and/or develop their professionalism. One of these new opportunities is the documentation of best practices and the increased role of the school library as a documentation center for information produced by the school, in particular, the teacher’s “grey literature.” If this happens, the school library (which is called School Library and Resource Centre in the 2002 IFLA guidelines) could be perceived as an essential laboratory in the institution of which it is a part of, that is, the school.
On what basis do we propose this new role for the school library? The growing importance of the evaluation and accountability processes obliges all organizations, including the school, to treasure, evaluate, and incorporate both best practices and tacit knowledge. The institution of the school, which by definition deals with learning, should learn to become a *learning organization*, an organization that learns from its history, capitalizes on its experiences, self-evaluates, and evaluates the quality of its own educational offerings.

From this point of view, many prospects are open to a school librarian and *documentalist*. Hannesdottir (1995), referring to the competences of the school librarian, included the competence of management, that is, general administrative management. Now instead, knowledge management (KM) is at the center, closely integrated with the other competence, that of information studies. What does this mean? In short, the school library should spend less time, perhaps completely stop, cataloguing through derived cataloguing all external information, monographs, or periodicals that are already catalogued by library systems and available on the Internet. The school librarian could instead spend more time cataloguing the grey literature produced by the school, the unique material connected to the unique context of the school.

The school librarian can contribute to this process if he or she knows how to become a documentalist of innovation processes and can, therefore, together with the school, participate in evaluation, auditing, and accountability processes to which all organizations and institutions are increasingly more subject in relation to their own users, their various stakeholders, and political and administrative decision-makers. The difficult processes of innovation undertaken by school administrators and teachers should be encouraged, stimulated, evaluated, and diffused through a variety of channels from local documentation centers and local Web sites to national and international online educational databanks. The best practices and tacit knowledge documentation of the school is from this point of view an area where the school library can perform a function that cannot be done by anyone else.

The changes requested of the school, from the transmission of knowledge to the formation of key competences, from where one has access to information to where one works hard to ensure formative success for every student, encourage all who work in the school—teachers, administrators, school librarians—to adopt new professional behavior, sometimes even the adoption of ethical codes on the quality of their own profession. Whoever works in the school is increasingly called on to take responsibility for the failure of students to find through forms of research and experimentation (e.g., action-research) how to overcome this failure. For example, teachers are called on to play a *maieutic* role (in Socratic teaching) and as a tutors and mentors. Rather than transmitting prepackaged information and knowledge, they must know how to ask the right questions at
the right moment. That is, teachers must know how to find significant problems that stimulate in the students the desire to go beyond knowledge in the common sense and to have access to knowledge formalized by the disciplines. These are all complex duties where teachers must often construct a new professional formation that the university (or other teacher education institution) did not offer originally. Teachers must become reflective practitioners. In this professional development process, they should not work alone, but with other colleagues, with other reflective practitioners, one of whom must be the school librarian. If teachers learn to do professional research to improve educational processes and educational results, a space opens for the school librarian, who could and should participate in this professional research, and for the school library, which could and should become the place for documenting this research.

As can easily be seen, we are dealing with a complex process of change in the school with results that cannot be taken for granted. The school library can be a powerful driver to support such innovation and change. For this reason, the documentation of the significant work of the teachers, of the strong and weak points, of the successes and failures encountered, of the problems resolved and those still to be resolved, constitutes an essential documentation for everyone, and it would be a terrible waste to lose it. The vision of the political decision-makers (such as the Lisbon strategy) is all very well, but its practical implementation is something else altogether. Not only is it difficult to introduce innovation into the school, but once it is introduced, it is also difficult to find the right communication modes that allow it to be transferred and generalized from one context to another. Therefore, documentation centers and educational online databanks that collect professional knowledge from problems, projects, and processes to products are important. Thus the professional work of the school librarian is important, in fact irreplaceable. At a local level, the more a school librarian can make the school library an essential factor for social inclusion, the more he or she can make the school library participate in the innovation processes that today involve educational systems at an international level.

References
Author Note

Paolo Odasso completed his doctorate in 1987 in the history of political philosophy. His dissertation examined the correlation between the epistemology of Dewey’s Logic as a Theory of Inquiry and his political philosophy and focused also on the link between democracy and education. He served as a teacher and school librarian from 1990 to 1999 and also trained inservice teachers by using various media including the Internet for improving educational processes. In 1999 he joined the Regional Institute of Educational Research of Piedmont (IRRE Piemonte http://www.irrepiemonte.it), which was part of the Italian National Ministry of Education. As an IRRE researcher, he carried out training activities with inservice teachers in the field of school libraries, building a national system of documentation of teachers’ best practices, experimenting with the correlation of information literacy with subject teaching, and analyzing the correlation between information and formation and between knowledge and competence. From 2002 to 2005, Paolo was also National Coordinator of the section of the Italian School Libraries of the Italian Association of Librarians. As a member of the IFLA Standing Committee of the Section of School Libraries and Resource Centers (SLRC), he took part in the translation into Italian of the 2002 IFLA-UNESCO SLRC Guidelines. In 2005 he became Director of the IRRE Piemonte.