Editorial

Taking the Library Out of the Library into the School

A theme that resonates for me as I read the articles in this issue of School Libraries Worldwide is that of “taking the library out of the library into the school.” By this, I mean thinking about the library as being within the school, visible throughout the school, and integral to the mission and work of the school. In the everyday practice of the school librarian, this can mean many things: for example, coordinating the acquisition and maintenance of the school’s instructional resources, not just those housed in the library and/or acquired with library funds; ensuring that the technology of the library reaches into the classrooms and is accessible from outside the school outside of school hours; working with the principal and other school leaders to address school issues such as a high drop-out rate or a low enrollment of girls in advanced mathematics or physics. The authors of the articles in this issue of School Libraries Worldwide challenge us to think about taking the library out of the library and into the school from a variety of perspectives.

Andrew K. Shelton, a researcher from a university in the United Kingdom, challenges us to think of the complexities of the library and of the information behavior of the children and youth who are seeking information. He organizes his discussion of those complexities around 10 information-seeking paradoxes. These he groups into four categories: (a) discrepancies between the theoretical and specialist aspects of the library and the practical everyday understandings and needs of library users; (b) developments in the information world that are different from or incompatible with the needs and abilities of library users; (c) attention to one concern may inadvertently create new problems in other seemingly unrelated areas; and (d) differences in the use of the language of the information world by researchers, school librarians, and academic librarians cause difficulties for information specialists as well as for library users.

Paolo Odasso, a former director of a regional institute of educational research in Italy and now a high school principal, argues that the school library can and should be a force for social inclusion in schools. The social inclusion function of the school library can help to address serious educational problems such as the high drop-out level in secondary schools (scholastic dispersion) and the need to reform educational practice, shifting our emphasis from learning content to developing competences. Odasso suggests that the school library can be a force for social inclusion and educational innovation in two unique ways: by organizing information so that
it is more accessible to all students, especially those having difficulties in school, and by collecting and organizing the school’s professional knowledge (knowledge management).

Linda B. Alexander and Mary Lou Morton, two researchers from a university in the United States, report on a collaborative project with school personnel that through the use of multicultural literature, attempted to address problems of low reading achievement and social inclusion in a culturally and ethnically diverse elementary school. This exploratory project involved students with reading and responding to picture-book versions of the Cinderella story from around the world. Initial results of the project seem to indicate that the use of multicultural literature can be an effective way to increase reading achievement and to raise cultural awareness in a positive way. The researchers recommend that a more formal research approach be used in order to confirm the results of this exploratory project.

The Theme Section of this issue of School Libraries Worldwide focuses on Knowledge Management in Schools and for Schools. Theme Editor Taghreed Al-qudsdi-ghabra is a researcher from the University of Kuwait. She has drawn together work that illustrates three aspects of the emerging field of knowledge management. Anne Marie Perrault, a researcher from a university in the US, explores the concept of the school as an information ecology as a way to understand changes in information use in schools. Helen Boelens, a school librarian and doctoral student from the Netherlands, discusses how changes in schools such as “new learning” approaches and ICT implementation require that school librarians expand their roles to include the management of information and knowledge within and beyond the school. Rebecca P. Butler, a researcher from a university in the US, examines worldwide copyright law from the perspective of the person in the school who often has to guide application of national and international copyright laws.