

---

## Model School Libraries: Tools or Threats? Reflections on a Development Project in Sweden

Louise Limberg

*Department of Library and Information Studies Research,  
Göteborg University, Sweden*

---

*This article presents reflections on the evaluation of a school library development project in the county of Örebro, Sweden. Each of six project schools was to create a model library of its own, tailored to the needs and wishes of that particular school. The main conclusions of the analysis of differences between the schools, in terms of project outcomes, indicate that school libraries may be purposeful tools for teaching and learning, but that they may also be experienced as threats by teachers who prefer traditional teaching. The complex process of information seeking and information use for learning raised serious questions with teaching implications for both librarians and teachers. Teaching teams as well as the principal's conceptions of library functions interacted closely with progress in methodological change and input of resources. Public and school libraries found common strategic interests in the development of the model school libraries.*

### Introduction

The purpose of this article is to discuss issues regarding the pedagogical, organizational, and strategic conditions for school library development, based on certain experiences from a Swedish project. A description of the situation of Swedish school libraries forms the background needed to present the design, the execution, and the main outcomes of the project from the evaluator's point of view (Limberg, 1996). A discussion of the main conclusions of the evaluation is the main topic of interest of the article.

### *Swedish School Libraries: The Current Situation*

Since the 1980s, Swedish school librarians have looked for role models in North America, particularly the USA. Basic philosophy about the educational role of school libraries, efforts to improve curriculum involvement, and the design of facilities and the level of resources have inspired and influenced thinking and action in the school library field. The writings and visits to Sweden of Carol Kuhlthau and David Loertscher, as well as visits of Swedish school librarians to sites of excellence in the USA such as Iowa City, have had a considerable impact on our library community.

During the 1990s, schools and libraries in Sweden have suffered severe cuts due to the recession, which strongly affected the economy of local governments. Public libraries and school libraries come under the responsi-

bility of local municipal government and are funded through municipal budgets. According to the current Library Act, in force since 1997, every school must have access to purposeful library services provided either in the school building or from the local public library. Before the current Library Act, the School Ordinance included a paragraph of similar content and wording.

Because Sweden has huge, sparsely populated areas outside the big urban communities, the structure and organization of schools and libraries varies considerably. In the rural areas, you may find elementary schools with 20-30 students, or even fewer. Urban areas, naturally, have bigger schools, and secondary schools normally have a larger number of students than the lower levels. The size of senior high schools may reach more than 2,000 students. Since the 1960s, high schools normally have school libraries of their own run by professional librarians. In Sweden, school librarians are not required to have the double qualification from both LIS and education. Elementary and middle-level schools often have a school library run by a teacher-librarian supported by a coordinating professional children's and school librarian. More often than not, the prime obligation for a teacher-librarian is to teach in class, and she or he may devote only a minor part of her or his teaching duties to library work. However, during the last decade, a growing number of schools have employed professional librarians, while others have cut back their library staff altogether. Almost 25% of Sweden's 1,900 or so public library units are combined with school libraries as far as facilities, staff, and collections go (Limberg, 1991, 1993, 1994). These varying societal, economic, demographic, and geographic conditions give rise to a great variety of models and patterns for the development of school library media programs.

The present Swedish national curriculum from 1994, approved by Parliament (Riksdagen), prescribes educational goals and objectives for all schools on an overall level. It is up to the professionals in the schools—teachers, librarians, principals, and other specialists—to shape education in accordance with these goals, to choose and develop various purposeful methods. Important educational goals, as stated in the national curriculum, are that students become independent learners, that they learn how to select and evaluate information in order to create meaning out of a variety of sources in a situation of continually growing information overload, and that they become critical thinkers and problem-solvers and responsible democratic citizens.

During the preparatory work preceding the decision about the new national curriculum of 1994, in some instances, considerable attention was paid to the role of school libraries in education. Initiatives and resources came primarily from practitioners in the work in schools and libraries in various municipalities and counties. One such important initiative, from Örebro county library, led to the Model School Libraries Project.

## The Model School Libraries Project

### *Origin, Aim, and Funding*

The project grew out of the realization by teachers and librarians of the problems caused by the differences between the information environment of their schools, characterized by traditional learning materials and poorly provided school libraries, on the one hand, and the information world of their students outside school, dominated by the mass media, information overload and rapid change, on the other hand.

The aim of the project was to set up model libraries in various schools throughout Örebro County, with the purpose of creating useful tools for teaching and learning in a rapidly changing world. Another aim was to develop cooperation and improve structures for the division of responsibility between school libraries and public libraries.

One important characteristic of the project was the funding model. The project was funded by Örebro County Library, the National Agency for Education, and the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs. The project budget paid for the project leader, who was a consultant at the county library and who provided professional expertise in library development for the schools. She devoted full attention to the project during the three-year period and worked in close cooperation with the staff concerned in every school. No money was allocated to the schools directly. Investments in information technology equipment, library facilities, media, and staff had to be funded by the schools themselves by various means.

### *Implementation*

Six schools representing all levels of Swedish education took part in the project, which lasted three years (1993-1995). Four of the schools had separate school libraries in their buildings, and two had combined school and public libraries on the premises. The types and sizes of schools were: (a) Hammars skola, year 1-6, 100 pupils (7-12 years old), rural village school, combined school and public library with teacher-librarian and library clerk; (b) Sörbyskolan, K-6, 165 pupils (6-12 years old), town school, separate school library with teacher-librarian; (c) Mikaelskolan, year 4-9, 400 pupils (10-16 years old), town school, combined school and public library with professional librarian; (d) Vialundskolan, year 7-9, 375 pupils (14-16 years old), town school, separate school library with teacher-librarian; (e) Bregårdsskolan, year 10-12, town school, 650 students (16-19 years old), separate school library with professional librarian; and (f) Fellingsbro folkhögskola (folk high school: a typical Scandinavian popular education institution), 110 adult students, separate school library with professional librarian.

Schools volunteered and had to qualify to participate in the project. Every project school was required to reallocate money from traditional teaching materials to library media and also to allow its librarian the time needed for

development work. No general library model was imposed on the schools. Each school set out to create a model library of its own, designed to fit the particular needs and wishes of that particular school. Development work gradually focused on five areas:

- collection (media) management and development;
- IT applications;
- development of teaching methods in classrooms and libraries;
- intensified cooperation between teachers and librarians;
- marketing of model sites and information about the development.

### Evaluation

The project process and outcomes were continually evaluated during the three-year period. I was engaged as evaluator in the capacity of expert in school librarianship. The evaluation focused on aspects of the interaction between teaching, learning, and library functions.

### *Methods and Data Collection*

Data were collected mainly through interviews with teachers, librarians, principals, and students during school visits once or twice every year. Initially, questionnaires were sent out to the same persons to collect basic data about the situation at each school in order to create a foundation for the assessment of the development during the project. The evaluation also used documents from the individual schools such as statements of goals and objectives, articles for the local press, information material for internal and external marketing, and annual reports. Examples of students' written presentations and students' and teachers' evaluations of assignments were analyzed. Two annual reports from the project leader on the state of the project after year 1 and year 2 were other documents used in the evaluation. The evaluator had continuous contacts with the project leader by mail and telephone.

### *Focus*

The analysis of the process and outcome of the project focused on an effort to understand why there were differences between the schools in their library development as regards resources and methodological change. The Model School Libraries Project searched for solutions to problems concerning the schools' needs for library services and the provision of information for teaching and learning. The evaluation found that not only did pedagogical or methodological factors influence the process, but framework factors like styles of school management and the market supply of media also influenced the development.

The main objective of the evaluation was the assembly and distribution of knowledge about matters such as the didactic and strategic conditions for school library development.

### Project Achievements

Every project school managed to improve its library as far as media and facilities were concerned. The emphasis on a wide variety of information sources had a positive and stimulating impact on teaching and learning in all the schools. However, school library development was an expensive undertaking and called for creative fundraising on the part of the principals. It is worth observing that these new investments were undertaken during a period of serious recession. Four of the schools also engaged in fundamental curriculum development as an important dimension of their library project. General traits of the development are presented in this section, emphasizing media management, curriculum development, and students' experiences.

#### *Media Collections: Management and Development*

As to changes in media collections and management, it is worth remembering that the project started some five years ago, which means that some of the references to media formats and physical location of materials may seem outdated today, when most schools are connected to the Internet and have rich access to electronic information. However, other questions such as the lack of children's media in the Swedish language still remain as current issues in teaching and learning today.

Efforts to build strong and purposeful media collections in the project libraries was an issue in the discussions preceding the project and became one of the project goals. An early plan was to use the first year to revise and strengthen media collections in close cooperation with the school librarians, the teachers, and the project leader. A strong focus on books was soon replaced by an interest in other media formats and a variety of methods for collection development. These included more critical selection, discarding and weeding, purchase of electronic media and equipment, and reallocation of media from classrooms and subject departments to library media centers. The view that collection building would be concluded after the first project year as a basis for further methodological development was abandoned. Both librarians and teachers realized that collection development and discussions about media selection would be a never-ending process, and they continued to pay considerable attention to such issues during the whole project period.

During this work *teachers* became gradually *more critical*, particularly about nonfiction books. Before the project, the teachers would normally be more critical in the selection of fiction, but less aware of quality matters in the selection of nonfiction. This implied a change from the "right" topic of a book as the chief criterion to paying critical attention to other criteria, such as language, composition, layout, and interplay between text and pictures.

Four of the six schools started to introduce *new media* quite massively, including encyclopedias and databases on CD-ROM, online databases, and connection to the Internet. These new media gave access to a wide variety of

new information sources for students and teachers, especially at the high school level. However, the impact of the new media differed between elementary schools and high schools. English is the predominant language on the Internet and on many CD-ROM disks available in Sweden (e.g., Encarta, Cinemania, Muscial Instruments, New Grolier, Dangerous Creatures, Global Explorer). This causes difficulties for many young students as well as for some high school students, and thus restricts the domains of usage for students' independent information seeking and learning. For elementary schoolchildren, there is still a lack of useful sources in any format on many subjects, such as society, politics, the arts, and humanities. For high schools, the new media and technology created a situation of information overload, which in turn led to questions about changing and improving teaching and learning methods in an information-rich environment.

### *Curriculum Development*

Curriculum development involved a range of aspects of both librarianship and teaching, for example, the character of assignments, user education, monitoring and supervision of students' work, and cooperation between librarians and teachers.

### *Character of Assignments*

Teachers gradually began to structure their students' assignments more firmly than previously. Abandoning the habit of giving students more or less total freedom of choice for library assignments, the teachers devoted increasing attention to structuring the task as to goals, content, and requirements for information seeking and use. This included an emphasis on students formulating their research questions and reflecting on the provenance, content, arguments, and values in information sources as well as the options for presentation. Toward the end of the project period, one elementary school teacher wrote in her report: "Resource-based teaching and taking the children's own questions as points of departure for an instructional unit is not new, but now we do it more systematically and with a greater awareness than before." A senior high school teacher in an interview made the following remark: "Maybe I used to leave my students in the lurch sometimes before. Today I cannot see how, as a teacher, I would be able to do my job without a library and a professional librarian." On all educational levels, the scope and content of assignments changed from being library tasks to being content-based problems of learning. This implies that the overall objective of an assignment was not linked solely to library skills, but to some important learning content and that students would have to learn about a problem through seeking and exploring a variety of information sources. Information seeking and use as well as library use were means to an end linked to problem content, not ends in themselves. This as an important step away from technical ways of using the library in education toward more authentic information and library use for real problems in real-life situations.

### *Information Skills Instruction*

Flexible scheduling has always been the normal way of library use in Swedish schools, mainly due to a lack of library staff. There has never been a large enough number of librarians to cope with the large number of students in a system of fixed scheduling. Librarians depend on cooperation with teachers for instructional programs. However, basic information skills instruction normally is the responsibility of a professional librarian, either in the school or in the neighboring public library.

During the Model School Library Project, librarians in many of the schools switched from traditional instructional methods according to a "locating or source" approach or a "pathfinder" approach to process-oriented approaches (Kuhlthau 1993a, p. 11). This meant great flexibility among the librarians in designing instructional sessions adjusted to the situation of particular groups of students and adapted to their specific learning process and context. Librarians also developed a repertoire of instructional programs, from guided tours in the library or on the Internet, to in-depth instruction, including the comparison and evaluation of search tools and information sources, normally linked to a specific learning content and often in direct cooperation with teachers. Sets of research planning sheets were designed and handed out to support students during information seeking and use.

Students were trained to teach other students. In one elementary school, groups of students were put in charge of the newly computerized catalogue and circulation systems to assist their fellow students.

The progression of students' learning of information skills gained more emphasis during the project. Earlier, students often had to put up with the same or similar types of instruction and exercises at every school level or whenever they met a new librarian during their educational career.

More process, content, and context-oriented instruction, more flexible methods of instruction, and a stronger emphasis on the progression in students' learning information seeking and use may summarize the project outcomes in the area of information skills instruction.

### *Information Use for Learning Purposes*

Many of the teachers emphasized that the most important teaching goal was to help students become critical users of information. This implied that they wanted their students to be able to evaluate information sources, to compare and assess the authority of different sources, and to adopt a critical and reflective approach in using information. These teachers appreciated the increasing availability of information, especially at the high school level, but acknowledged problems of information overload for their students. Both high school teachers and librarians observed that students had growing difficulties in using information because of increased access to vast amounts of information.

Teachers as well as librarians and principals warned against the use of information technology for its own sake. They stressed the importance of developing didactic methods for using IT to provide students with the possibilities of creating meaning or understanding of complex phenomena in the world. This may sound like rhetoric and, naturally, there were differences within the same school and between the different schools as to both methods and progress in this area. Such differences, some reasons for them, and their consequences are discussed below.

Among researchers and practitioners in the school library field, the awareness that information seeking and use for learning purposes imply strong elements of critical thinking is well documented (see, e.g., Craver, 1989; Eisenberg & Brown, 1992; Kuhlthau, 1993a; Limberg, 1997, 1998; Mancall et al., 1986; Stripling & Pitts, 1988). The project evaluation stressed the need for more research and development in this domain.

### *Students' Experiences*

Students' experiences include aspects of how the students contributed to development and change and how these changes influenced learning conditions.

Students were actively involved in library development in all project schools. In the four compulsory schools (various levels of K-9), students were trained to take charge of computerized circulation, to guide and instruct fellow students in the library in various databases and in computer use, and to read or tell stories to younger children. At the senior high school and the adult education school, the principals maintained that the students had actively pushed the development of IT applications and library changes through their requirements and suggestions. In several of the schools, students were also engaged in the selection of media.

At the same time, students were affected by the changes in various ways. The growing availability of a wide variety of information sources, sometimes leading to situations of information overload, formed new possibilities for individual learning, very different from prior conditions of more textbook-based learning. Students had access to a broad range of sources and had to take a growing responsibility for their own learning, including choices of relevant information sources. This created certain advantages, but at the same time, studying and learning grew more complex.

The evaluation showed that students found the selection of relevant information complicated. They had difficulties in distinguishing "what was important, since most of it was not important" (student's wording). The richness of information in literature, periodicals, and databases gave rise to complicated selection procedures. They experienced overload of irrelevant or "unimportant" (student's wording) information. Students' relevance criteria seem to have been often uncertain, and often dependent of their prior subject knowledge (Limberg, 1998; Pitts, 1994, 1995; Stripling, 1996).



At the same time, many students developed their ability to evaluate information sources critically. They would better observe the currency of information and the values, hidden or explicit, when comparing sources. Students would often remark that information seeking was a time-consuming activity and that they had to improve the time planning for their assignments. The findings about the complexities of students' information use for learning purposes indicate a need for research in order to gain a better understanding of the process of information use in learning contexts.

## Differences Between the Schools

### *Quantitative Differences*

Four of the schools made considerable investments in IT equipment and in professional development as well as in more library staff and the expansion of facilities in order to implement changes in the use of information for teaching and learning. Two schools remained more traditional and restricted their investment in technology to automation of library catalogues and circulation. No increases in library staff or facilities took place. In these two schools, media budgets increased during the first project year but later relapsed to a lower level.

As mentioned above, the project budget was tied to the project leader, a library consultant who provided expertise in school library development. No extra funding for any investments were allocated to the project schools. All new investments had to be paid for via other sources, and it remained for principals and other staff to find such monies. Means of funding included reconsidering earlier priorities, requests for extra money from school authorities and local government, and external fundraising from organizations, local business, and parent-teacher associations. At the time, this was quite unusual in Sweden, where all public sector equipment normally would be publicly financed, and donations to schools were rare, except for minor gifts. (Since the early 1990s a change has occurred, and donations from private businesses and funds have become somewhat more frequent, but it is still not usual.) This gives rise to questions about what promoted or impeded investments in new resources. There were no obvious differences between the schools as to the possibilities of external fundraising. Why did four schools succeed in such activities while the remaining two did not?

### *Qualitative Differences*

Important methodological change and development concerning media selection and management as well as curriculum development are described above. However, other essential differences between the schools emerged during the three-year period. Although four of the schools continued to develop methods for cooperation between teachers and librarians regarding media selection and resource-based teaching, two of the schools ceased to work actively on changing their methods in these areas.

The evaluation showed clear evidence of a correlation between quantitative increases in library resources and qualitative change in methods and services. However, a higher yearly budget allocation for media or staff did not necessarily interact with rapid methodological change. Why did both quantitative and qualitative library changes occur in four of the schools throughout the project period, while two schools remained quite static after the first year?

### Analysis of Project Achievements

The analysis of project outcomes focused on the qualitative differences in methodological and organizational changes as well as the quantitative differences in resource input in the six school libraries, that is, staff, facilities, media budgets, and IT equipment. The analysis was conducted with a view to understanding the reasons for such differences between the schools and to identifying specific elements that promoted or prevented development and change.

#### *Tools or Threats?*

A lack of response from teachers to library development indicates that these teachers would cope well in their jobs without a strong library. Other resources were considered more important. Strong resistance to library development will rarely be demonstrated by teachers. Nevertheless, in two of the project schools, large inputs of library resources were not permitted to encroach on other, more highly appreciated resources, for example, new textbooks or instructional software to suit traditional teaching methods.

Earlier evaluations of Swedish education have shown that change and development in schools seldom concern the core activity of education, that is, teaching (Sandström & Ekholm, 1984; Miles et al., 1987). Instead, they often touch on contextual phenomena like organizational or decision-making structures, contacts between schools and external organizations and associations, or sports or health programs. An evaluation from the National Agency for Education (Skolverket, 1996) found that, so far, the pressure for change in schools has not brought about any fundamental change in the still prevailing traditional teaching methods.

For decades, libraries have been seen as necessary but harmless departments of schools (Loertscher, 1988). The Model School Libraries Project may be understood as an attempt to change the role of libraries in the project schools so as to transform them into viable tools for teaching and learning. The lack of progress in two of the schools after the first year may be interpreted as a conception of the library as a peripheral phenomenon and a wish among the staff that it remain like that. When library development implied prioritizing library media over textbooks or using the facilities for library purposes rather than as music and drama performance hall for the children's arts programs, the clash of interests became evident. My interpretation is that the underlying conflicting interests concerned fundamental disagreement

about student-centered, problem-based learning and traditional teaching methods

In the four schools where radical library development took place, principals as well as librarians and teachers set about giving a *core instructional role to the library*. Financial as well as pedagogical problems were encountered and were overcome in various ways. One conclusion from the evaluation was that a prerequisite for turning libraries into viable tools for teaching and learning is that teachers, librarians and principals view the library as an integral part of a school's *core activity*. When this happens, libraries will support and stimulate student-centered, problem-based teaching and learning. However, such libraries may be experienced as disturbing or even *threatening* by those who prefer traditional teaching methods.

### *Organizational Structures*

The project schools differed in respect to educational level, size, urban or rural location, and independent or combined school-and-public library. The evaluation tried to analyze organizational differences in order to find out if or how such structures influenced differences in library conditions. The outcome of these analyses indicated that differences in organizational structures did not have a strong impact on library development. The four schools that succeeded in fundraising and continuous methodological change represented all educational levels as well as various sizes between the smallest and the largest project school. Of these four schools, two had independent school libraries and two had combined school-and-public libraries.

The four successful schools developed more sophisticated cooperation with their local public libraries and benefited from this through better tailored services as well as access to online databases and search tools. The combined school-and-public libraries initially had larger media collections than the independent school libraries but, nonetheless, they had to reorganize and weed their collections in order to adjust them to the requirements of each school. One clear finding from the evaluation was that *active cooperation between school and public library led to progressive school library development* in the project. This conclusion is also valid for the role of the county library as an initiator, coordinator, and partial funder of the project.

### *Public and School Libraries*

It seems clear that, in the combined school-and-public libraries, both types of libraries benefited from the project. Before the project, the combined libraries looked and functioned like public libraries rather than school libraries. During the project, they were redesigned to improve their school library services and functions. School budgets reinforced the previously modest public library units and thus supported the introduction of more advanced IT equipment and better media resources than would otherwise have been possible. The schools profited from the larger facilities and media collections of the public library resources in these combined libraries. Staff was rein-

forced through the combination of functions. There is strong evidence that when the combined libraries showed their *double* character of public and school library, this generated new resources for the library, which in turn raised the service quality for both the school and the general public.

### *Management*

All six school principals were positive toward library development and were eager to join the project from the start. However, the evaluation found differences between the principals' ways of acting and thinking about their school library, and these differences affected project outcomes. In the four more successful schools, principals viewed their school library as a means for reinforcing and supporting problem-based, student-centered teaching and learning. This conception of the library was reflected in actions. In these schools, principals as well as other leaders took it as a mission to raise funds and *allocate money* for library development purposes, such as media budgets, expansion of facilities, increased staff, input of IT equipment, and professional development for teachers and librarians. They also actively *promoted* library development internally in their schools among all staff, at meetings, in planning and annual reports, and so forth. They were active in *external marketing* of the library development project at conferences and toward external organizations and institutions, for example, businesses, PTAs, politicians. Finally, they actively monitored library development during the project years. The approaches to school library development and the actions of these principals agree with the highest levels of Loertscher's (1988) taxonomy for the role of school administrators.

These four principals viewed the library as an integral part of their school organization. They had a *holistic* conception of various educational methods and functions interacting with one another and reinforcing the joint efforts to reach the educational goals and objectives of the school. They did not talk about various functions, for example, the library, as competing with other functions such as the textbook or learning materials budget. These principals emphasized how library development interacted with curriculum development as well as other goals such as equity between boys and girls or improved conditions for the general public in the school district.

In contrast, the principals of the two more stagnant schools underlined how difficult it was to prioritize among various functions or sections of their schools. Although they were positive toward library development, they regretted not being able to allocate enough resources to this end. They blamed this on scarce resources and gave examples of conflicting goals and of their duties to prioritize the implementation of the new national curriculum or some other profile program of their school, instead of seeing the contingency of the library as support to these other missions. These leaders thought about the school library program as a goal in itself, quite apart from the core educational activities, and conflicting with other important goals.

This way of reasoning implies an atomistic conception of the school library as well as of other school sections, programs, or functions.

The conclusion is that principals had a decisive influence over library development in their schools. Differences between the project schools in terms of input of all types of resources as well as support for curriculum development interacted with the differences between the principals' conceptions of the school library. In schools where substantial resources were invested and important progress in library development took place, the principal expressed a holistic conception of educational development, including library functions. In schools where library development ceased after one year or so, the principals expressed an atomistic conception of school functions and, consequently, of the library as a separate entity, competing with other discrete entities for resources. An atomistic conception of various school functions contributed to territorial thinking and did not favor library development in the schools.

### *Professional Specialization and Interaction: Teamwork*

#### *Professional Roles in Interaction*

There is abundant literature about the importance of cooperation between teachers and librarians in the context of education (Donham van Deusen, 1996; Kuhlthau, 1993a, 1993b; Limberg, 1990; Loertscher, 1988). Intensified cooperation between librarians and teachers was one of the project goals and a prerequisite for the development work.

The evaluation showed that the interaction between experts of different professions—librarians and teachers—gave rise to methodological innovation and change in both librarianship and education, as outlined above under *Project Achievements*. Teachers were mainly responsible for change and development of instructional methods, but in close interaction with school librarians or the project leader, or sometimes a librarian from the local public library. Librarians took the main responsibility for collection development and change of methods for information skills instruction. These changes were tightly linked to the work of teachers and students. The project leader was not a specialist in education, but her ambition was to understand and meet the needs of teachers and school librarians so as to propose ideas and introduce new methods tailored to educational needs but grounded in her professional expertise as a librarian. During the project, three of the schools increased their professional library staff on a long-term basis, that is, not restricted to the project period.

In the two more stagnant schools, there was no increase of professional library staff. These schools also drew less on the project leader than the other schools. They rarely contacted her or asked her for advice. More often than not, her visits to those schools took place on her initiative. She, on her part, stuck to the original project design that each school develop its own model library and that her role would be to inspire, stimulate, and contribute

according to their wishes and requirements, not to impose a model from outside. The result is that in the stagnant schools there was less cooperation between teachers and librarians than in the other schools.

### *Teamwork*

In the stagnant schools, the librarians seemed quite alone in their efforts to develop the library. Their principals regretted the lack of progress after the first year, and the teachers observed improvements of library collections but went on teaching as before. "Business as usual" was typical for those schools. No task force or working group would be established to carry on the library project.

In two of the more progressive schools, teams were set up to work with and monitor the library development project. In the two other progressive but smaller schools, the school librarian was a natural member of teaching teams that also engaged in methodological change involving the library. As pointed out above, the principals' approaches to the library and educational development decisively affected the project outcomes.

One important conclusion of the evaluation was that, in this project, successful library development was the result of creative teamwork. The teams consisted of people of different professions—librarians, teachers, administrators, library consultant—and the members of such teams worked in various combinations in different situations or contexts. The team members had common interests in working toward the same educational goals, but different professional skills and experiences and different networks in the world outside the schools.

These findings concerning the Model School Library Project are consistent with Kuhlthau's (1993b) investigations of primary inhibitors and basic enablers for successful implementation of library media programs. Kuhlthau identified four basic enablers for successful development, the first of which was "A team approach to teaching with administrators, teachers, and library media specialists playing essential roles in the instructional team" (p. 16). It is also consistent with management theory, which stresses the importance of establishing creative groups throughout an organization in order to improve product and service quality. Creative groups should be composed according to a complementary principle, where different types of knowledge, personalities, and ways of thinking are present (Olaisen & Johannessen, 1993).

Investigating the special skills, attributes, and perspectives that a school library media specialist brought to an instructional planning process as a member of a teaching team, Donham van Deusen (1996) found that the role of library media specialists evolved through teamwork. The role of the library media specialist was grounded in a responsibility for providing resources but, as a member of a teaching team, her role gradually expanded to include recommending how to use the resources and coordinating the efforts of teachers. The teachers especially appreciated her double role as an *insider* and an *outsider*. She was accepted as part of the team but, at the same

time, she was an outsider because she was not a classroom teacher. The role of both insider and outsider is special for the librarian in that in both roles she is on equal footing with the other team members. A principal on the team would be an insider in his capacity of teacher, but he would be in a supervisory position in his outsider role as a principal. As an insider, the library media specialist could contribute her particular knowledge and skills to the team work. In the position of equal and outsider, she could contribute to clarifying plans and standpoints or testing or challenging ideas among the teachers and thus help the team move forward.

The conclusions from the evaluation of the Swedish project underline the importance of the composition of teams in the successful schools, where the different professional skills, experiences, and positions of team members contributed to creative development.

### *Sustainable Development?*

At the conclusion of a development project, an obvious question is: Will this last? What will happen now that the project is finished? Will they go back to "business as usual"? The evaluator's assessment was that continued development is likely to take place in the four schools that were successful in improving their library media programs. This statement is founded on several of the project characteristics.

The teamwork created a more solid basis for continued development than if the achievements had depended on single persons like the project leader or one school librarian. It is important to observe that the reinforcement of these school libraries was brought about during a period of heavy budget cuts in Swedish municipalities. Some of the principals stressed that the funding principles, where nothing extra was allocated to the schools via the project, rendered the development more sustainable. One indication of this was that three schools actually increased their long-term library staff.

The project design that each school develop a model of its own, tailored to the particular needs and wishes of that school, increases the prospects of sustainable development. This design implied that each school assumed the full responsibility, financially as well as educationally, for the changes that were made. This empowerment of the staff concerned in every school might make project experiences and achievements usable for the future.

### *Concluding Remarks*

The Model School Libraries Project set goals and explored ways of improving library media programs for teaching and learning purposes. The experiences of the project indicate enablers for future development in other schools. Important elements that had a positive impact on innovation and development were creative teamwork toward common educational objectives and the principals' active approach in the project. These findings are consistent with earlier research by Donham van Deusen (1996), Kuhlthau (1993a, 1993b), and Loertscher (1988), as shown above.

Important new results from this project are the differences between the principals' conceptions of school functions, where a holistic conception of educational development favored library development and an atomistic conception led to priority conflicts. A second interesting finding is that a prerequisite for dynamic school library development is that the library be considered a core educational activity. When this is about to be accomplished, the school library may be viewed as a threat by teachers who prefer traditional instructional methods. Conflicting interests over resources may obscure more fundamental conflicts about educational methods and goals, where a strong library may represent a force that will not be tolerated.

Third, it was found that school libraries and public libraries may have common strategic interests in combining efforts to improve school library services. During this project, they profited from acting as allies rather than as competitors in the Swedish municipalities.

The project outcomes indicated that improved library media programs may enhance the quality of teaching and learning and revealed motives for resistance grounded in differing educational philosophies. However, such progressive development also gave rise to issues concerning the risk that easy access to vast amounts of information may lead to increasing confusion among students instead of improved conditions for learning. This is a growing concern among librarians and teachers, and further research is needed to understand the new learning environment and to design appropriate methods for it.

## References

- Craver, K.W. (1989). Critical thinking: Implications for research. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 18(1), 13-18.
- Donham van Deusen, Jean. (1996). The school library media specialist as a member of the teaching team: "Insider" and "outsider." *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 11(3), spring, 229-248.
- Eisenberg, Michael B., & Brown, Michael K. (1992). Current themes regarding library and information skills instruction. Research supporting and research lacking. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 20(2), 103-111.
- Kuhlthau, Carol C. (1993a). *Seeking meaning: A process approach to library and information services*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Kuhlthau, Carol C. (1993b). Implementing a process approach to information skills: A study identifying indicators of success in library media programs. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 22(1), 11-18.
- Limberg, Louise. (1990). *Skolbibliotek för kunskap och skapande. Ett ide- och servicematerial för lärare och bibliotekarier om biblioteket i undervisningen (School libraries for knowledge and creativity. Ideas for teachers and librarians about the educational role of libraries)*. Stockholm: Utbildningsförlaget.
- Limberg, Louise. (1991). Sweden. In J.E Lowrie & M. Nagakura (Eds.), *School libraries: International developments* (2nd ed, pp. 24-36). Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow.
- Limberg, Louise. (1993). Swedish school libraries for education 2000: Fears, hopes, and expectations in Swedish school librarianship. In Carol C. Kuhlthau (Ed.), *School library media annual*, 11 (pp. 59-64). Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Limberg, Louise. (1994). Libraries for pleasure reading and learning. *Swedish Library Research/Svensk biblioteksforskning* 1, 7-15.



- Limberg, Louise. (1996). *Skolbiblioteksmodeller. Utvärdering av ett utvecklingsprojekt i Örebro län. (Model school libraries. Evaluation of a development project in the County of Örebro)*. Borås: VALFRID.
- Limberg, Louise. (1997). Information use for learning purposes. In P. Vakkari, R. Savolainen, & B. Dervin (Eds.), *Information seeking in context* (pp. 275-289). London: Taylor Graham.
- Limberg, Louise. (1998). *Att söka information för att lära. En studie av samspelet mellan informationssökning och lärande. (Experiencing information seeking and learning. A study of the interaction between two phenomena. With extended English summary)*. Borås: VALFRID. Dissertation Göteborg University.
- Loertscher, David V. (1988). *Taxonomies of the school library media program*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Mancall, Jacqueline C., et al. (1986). Educating students to think: The role of the school library media program. A concept paper written for the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 15(1) 18-27.
- Miles, M.B., et al. (Eds.). (1987). *Lasting school improvement: Exploring the process of institutionalization*. Leuven: Acco (Organization for economic cooperation and development. International school improvement project).
- Olaisen, Johan, & Johannessen, Jon-Arild. (1993). From strategic to creative management. Dynamic learning and information processing in six Norwegian banks. In J. Olaisen (Ed.), *Information management. A Scandinavian approach* (pp. 267-299). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Pitts, Judy. (1994). *Personal understandings and mental models of information: A qualitative study of factors associated with the information seeking and use of adolescents*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Florida State University, School of Library and Information Studies.
- Pitts, Judy. (1995). Mental models of information: The 1993-94 AASL/Highsmith research award study. *School Library Media Quarterly*, 22(3), 177-184.
- Sandström, B., & Ekholm, M. (1984). *Stabilitet och förändring i skolan. (Stability and change in education)*. Stockholm: Liber Utbildningsförlaget & Skolöverstyrelsen (SÖ Utbildningsforskning; FoU-rapport; 50).
- Skolverket. (1996). *Bilden av skolan. (The National Agency for Education: The image of Swedish education)*. Stockholm. (Skolverkets rapport; 100).
- Stripling, Barbara K. (1996). Quality in school library media programs: Focus on learning. *Library Trends*, 44(3), 631-656.
- Stripling, Barbara K., & Pitts, Judy. (1988). *Brainstorms and blueprints: Teaching library research as a thinking process*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

### Author Note

Since 1981, Louise Limberg has been a lecturer at the Swedish School of Library and Information Studies, University of Borås. She recently graduated as a PhD of LIS at Göteborg university. The topic of her dissertation was a explorative study of the interaction between information seeking and learning.