
Developing a Self-Evaluation Model for English School Libraries

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The ability to demonstrate the impact that school libraries have on learning is becoming increasingly important. This article reports on a recent project undertaken in England by the Centre for Information Research (CIRT) on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The project involved a survey of school library staff, teachers, and headteachers and resulted in the production of draft self-evaluation models for English school libraries that will allow school librarians to demonstrate to teachers, governors, inspectors, and others the contribution that their services can make to teaching, learning, and attainment levels. The research team also investigated current evaluation practices and identified a number of issues that need to be addressed to ensure the successful adoption of the models in schools.

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that school libraries can make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning. However, in the past, there has been little attempt to develop a consistent way of providing evidence to support this belief in schools in England. There is clearly a need for school libraries to be able to demonstrate to teachers, governors, inspectors, parents, and pupils the contribution that their services can make to formal and informal learning and to attainment levels.

It was in the light of this concern that the School Libraries Working Group (SLWG), managed by the government Department for Education and Skills (DfES), commissioned the Centre for Information Research (CIRT) at the University of Central England in Birmingham (UCE) to develop pilot models, focused on learning and teaching outcomes, to assist the self-evaluation of primary (serving 5-11-year-old students) and secondary (serving 11-18-year-old students) school libraries. To inform the development of these models, the research team carried out a survey of teachers and library staff to ascertain current evaluation practices and attitudes and to encourage suggestions regarding the development of the models.

Although some researchers such as Lance, Welborn, and Hamilton-Pennell (1993), Lance, Rodney, and Hamilton-Pennell (2000), and Smith (2001) have examined the relationship between quantitative indicators such as level of budgets, collection size, staffing hours, and number of library visits and levels of achievement, much of this evidence is from the United States. Few

studies of this type have been carried out in the United Kingdom, where there are a number of fundamental differences in the training and qualifications of library staff, in the school curriculum, and in the regional organization and management of school libraries.

There is no statutory basis for school library provision in the UK. In a survey of secondary school libraries conducted by Sheffield Hallam University in 2000, it was reported that overall, 28.1% of schools in England had either a full-time or part-time qualified librarian; this was considerably lower than is the case in Scotland where 67.1% had a qualified librarian. In 20.3% of English schools, the library was managed by a teacher or teacher-librarian, and in 34.3% responsibility fell to a clerical assistant. The amount spent on the library also varied noticeably from school to school. The average was £6.62 per pupil, but one fifth spent less than £2.00 per pupil, whereas 14% spent more than £10.00 per pupil. The majority of UK school libraries (79.5%) had organized induction or orientation programs in place, and around half attempted to teach information skills systematically as a whole-school approach (Survey and Statistical Research Centre, 2002). The role of libraries in supporting the curriculum has been strengthened in recent years by the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and Literacy Across the Curriculum by the government in England.

Schools Library Services (SLSs) are provided by most local authorities in the UK to support libraries in individual schools by offering a range of resources and services. In some cases, these are centrally funded and serve all schools, but in an increasing number of authorities, schools have to make the choice to "buy in." In 2001-2002, 10 English authorities had no such SLS. Their exact role varies from area to area, but commonly includes resources specifically to support the curriculum and advisory and training services in terms of library design, curriculum development, and learning skills (Creaser & Maynard, 2002).

It was acknowledged at the start of the project that the self-evaluation models produced would need to cater for the diverse range of school libraries that currently exist in England. The research team believed that it was crucial to involve practitioners at every stage of development to ensure that the models that were developed were practical tools that catered effectively for the needs of those working in schools. In addition to the questionnaire survey described in this article, a small group of local practitioners from the Birmingham area was formed to comment on drafts of the model, and in order to involve practitioners from a wider geographical area, two small workshops of teachers and librarians were held.

Evaluation and Self-Evaluation

Evaluation enables libraries or other organizations to determine the quality or value of their policies, strategies, programs, projects, services, processes, or performance. Evaluation may be conducted for a range of purposes, for

example, to improve services, to support decision-making, to learn about the reasons for successes and failures, or for accountability purposes. It may be conducted by either internal or external evaluators. As MacBeath, Schratz, Meurat, and Jakobsen (2000) have pointed out, self-evaluation has a different rationale from external evaluation, as its primary impulse is development rather than accountability. Self-evaluation is a mechanism through which organizations can be empowered and can monitor their own progress. An important feature of self-evaluation is that it allows staff to develop their own agendas and to focus on particular aspects that they have identified as in need of improvement. This can give the findings greater meaning and enhance their practical use. As well, findings from self-evaluation are more likely to be acted on effectively.

According to Simons (1981), a major justification for self-evaluation is enhanced professionalism. However, some people may remain suspicious of the purpose of evaluation or see it as an activity that adds unnecessarily to existing workloads. There is also a danger that staff may be too close to the issues to be able to examine the evidence impartially. For example, they may be tempted to choose an area in which the library is believed to perform well rather than one that poses more of a challenge. Nevertheless, both external and self-evaluation are essential, as Stenhouse (1975) has argued,

External and internal evaluators are equally important: the former provide expertise and objectivity, and the latter familiarity and understanding. The two roles are distinct yet complementary and both are necessary for effective evaluation. (p. 83)

School Library Evaluation Models

In the development of school library evaluation models for English schools, the research team reflected on existing models available for the evaluation of libraries and similar services in the UK and elsewhere. Although models designed to evaluate various types of library were considered, the research team concentrated on those intended for use in schools. Most had been developed in the US and based on the Information Power structure (for more information on this, consult http://www.ala.org/aasl/ip_implementation.html). It is interesting to note the number of alternative models that have been based on Information Power, for example, the *Texas School Library Standards* (Texas Education Agency, 1997), the New York State Education Department's *School Library Media Program Evaluation* (University of the State of New York, 1998), The *Beyond Proficiency* evaluation rubric (Kentucky Department of Education, 2001), and the *School Library Media Standards Handbook* (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002). The most common approach taken was to evaluate the library in terms of:

- the role of the library media specialist;
- the library media program (goals, budget, planning);

- the collection (range, selection procedures, organization, accessibility, etc.);
- the library personnel;
- the facilities (accommodation and access).

Although differences between school library and general education provision in the US and the UK had to be borne in mind when considering the applicability of these models, they did provide a useful starting point for the research team, particularly in terms of the overall structure of a model for England

It was work carried out to develop school library self-evaluation tools in Scotland that perhaps had the greatest influence on the research team. Interviews were conducted with seven members of the working party responsible for devising *Taking a Closer Look at the School Library Resource Centre* (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department/Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum/Scottish Library Association/Scottish Library and Information Council, 1999) and *Performance Information in School Library Resource Centres* (Scottish Library and Information Council, 2002). The Scottish whole-school self-evaluation model, *How Good is Our School? Self-Evaluation Using Performance Indicators (HGIOS)* (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2002), was a major influence on the format and structure of the tools developed for school libraries in England. The Scottish working party had decided to relate library self-evaluation closely to whole-school documents to ensure it would be more readily accepted by the education world. It was felt that the model needed to be related to concepts that teachers are familiar with in terms of look and phrasing. A more library-focused model might not have been as easily accepted.

In general, the Scottish interviewees reported that schools appreciated the fact that these documents had been published; for most, self-evaluation had been a positive experience. Many librarians had used the tools as a basis for development planning and to argue for increased budgets and staffing, as well as specific developments such as the introduction of automated systems. However, some had complained that the introduction of self-evaluation led to a heavier workload, and others did not see evaluation as a part of their job. Although this is an attitude that is gradually becoming less common, librarians still needed to be reassured about evaluation and encouraged to recognize the benefits.

Research Design

To inform the initial development of the self-evaluation models for England, a questionnaire for school staff was developed with the assistance of the School Libraries Working Group (see Appendix A). A request for contributions was posted on mailing lists used by teachers or school library staff, and respondents had the option of replying by post, e-mail, or telephone. Forty-six questionnaires were requested by staff working in school libraries.

To encourage further input from primary school staff, requests were sent to a number of School Library Services (SLSs), which responded with names of individuals they thought might be interested. Although only 27 school library staff returned completed questionnaires, these did represent a variety of types of schools in terms of size, age range, and gender of pupils, location, and library staffing. Most were staff from secondary schools. Respondents had a range of job titles. Not surprisingly, the most common was Librarian; 11 had this title, and a further four respondents were Learning Resource Centre Managers. The range of other job titles to feature included: Library Assistant, Resource Librarian, Information Services Manager, Head of Learning Resources, and Director of Learning Resources. Just two were teachers as well as librarians. Some library staff had additional roles in the school; one was the school's publicity officer, and another was also the Literacy Coordinator. To complement the responses from school library staff, a shortened version of the questionnaires (see Appendix B) was posted to 36 Beacon schools with expertise in self-assessment/self-review. These are schools that have been identified as among the best performing in the country and represent examples of successful practice that they are encouraged to share with others. Eleven headteachers from such schools responded.

Together, the responses to these two questionnaires give some idea of current attitudes toward evaluation, its problems, and the potential benefits. Both questionnaires asked teachers and librarians for their views about a possible model and, in particular, for details of any evaluation currently being conducted in school libraries. This included questions about the reasons for evaluation, methods used, types of evidence collected, and how the information was used. As the survey was intended to gather qualitative data on current practice and views rather than to look for findings that might be generalized, the relatively low response rate did not present serious problems. The data from both surveys were analyzed using qualitative techniques, and the research team focused on the issues listed above, in particular, focusing on any similarities and differences between the attitudes of library staff and headteachers.

Findings From the Survey of Current Practice

The Importance of Evaluating the School Library

Respondents were asked for their views on whether the evaluation of the school library was a worthwhile activity. Although a small number of school librarians thought that it was not worth the time and effort involved as the findings had little impact, the vast majority felt that evaluation was important. As one pointed out,

Evaluation is crucial. The purpose of any library service is to serve the information needs of the community in which it functions. Without evaluating the impact of that service, you have no way of knowing whether or not your service is effective in providing what is needed.

Another commented on the need for all aspects of the education system, including school libraries, to demonstrate actively the contribution they make to teaching, learning, and attainment.

For a long time the school library has been regarded as a “good thing” but subject to cuts in funding and variable use. It needs to be seen as a firm curricular support. As with virtually everything else in education, this needs to be measured or identified.

Similarly, in the Beacon schools, most headteachers were clearly already well aware of the importance of evaluating the library.

Overall school evaluation determines the needs of the children in the school in every aspect of academic life. An evaluation of the school library will ensure we have suitable books to meet those needs. For example, if the evaluation reveals a need for more suitable literature for boys this will be a focus when the library is next stocked. Evaluation ensures we have a suitable balance of books that are in line with the curriculum requirements and our SDP [School Development Plan].

Themes for Evaluation

Most respondents chose to focus on a particular theme, feeling it was necessary to limit the scope of evaluation due to a lack of time and staff. In most cases, they selected areas that were known to be in need of attention, some of which had been explicitly identified in school or library improvement plans that outline a strategy for the next three years. Unsurprisingly, the government inspection department, OFSTED, the main aim of which is to help improve the quality and standards of education through independent inspection and regulation, was mentioned on a number of occasions as the catalyst for evaluation, and the type of evidence collected was often tailored to the requirements of inspectors. In other instances, themes were chosen largely for reasons of convenience, for example, it was thought that the data would be fairly easy to access. Sometimes, a focus was chosen for “traditional” reasons, for example, because it was referred to frequently in librarianship literature or had formed part of the librarian’s initial training. It was notable that evaluation was seen by many library staff as a nonessential aspect of their job and something they did in their own time; for this reason, a number said they chose a topic “just out of interest.”

Headteachers in the Beacon schools were more likely to have a broader view of library evaluation, seeing it as just one aspect of whole-school evaluation. For example, in one school, the library was included under almost all areas of whole-school evaluation including community (how the school library works with parents); premises (the library environment); and quality of teaching and learning (how staff use the library). A number of headteachers mentioned that the focus would change depending on current school priorities.

The evaluation of library management was the theme with which library staff appeared to be most comfortable and with which they had the greatest

experience of carrying out evaluation, although this was often on a fairly informal basis. It was something librarians might do, essentially for their own information, to identify ways to improve their services and working practices. However, such information might also be used to demonstrate to school managers that the library had made effective use of resources. The specific areas of library management most frequently mentioned were:

- Stock provision and services, in particular, how these support the curriculum and other activities such as reader development;
- Budgeting and demonstrating value for money;
- Library use by individuals and classes.

The evaluation of the impact of the library on teaching and learning was a theme clearly seen as important as the evaluation of library management. As one respondent said,

When it is possible to demonstrate an impact on someone's reading or learning this is the most powerful argument of all because it is most valued by other educationalists.

However, this type of evaluation was also considerably more problematic than library management. Although the demonstration of impact is crucial if libraries are to be valued in the education community, respondents had found it difficult to collect convincing evidence in this area.

The Practical Organization of Evaluation

Although in many schools evaluation was an activity that was undertaken informally by library staff simply when they were able to find the time, in others, it formed part of the librarian's annual performance review. A Beacon school headteacher reported that the library had agreed-upon annual targets that formed part of the school's improvement plan and were linked to the whole-school priorities. In schools without a librarian, there was often more than one person with a degree of responsibility for library evaluation. For example, in one school, the Literacy Coordinator and headteacher shared responsibility.

Although some data, such as issue figures, were collected on a regular basis, perhaps daily or weekly, other types of evaluation were conducted more intermittently, often taking the form of an intensive study conducted over a short time scale. For example, one respondent mentioned that the library's Homework Club was the subject of an action research project. In a few schools, library staff had devised sampling strategies, such as collecting figures once a term rather than carrying out continual monitoring.

Methods of Evaluation

The questionnaire responses from school library staff indicated that a variety of methods were currently being used to evaluate school libraries in England.

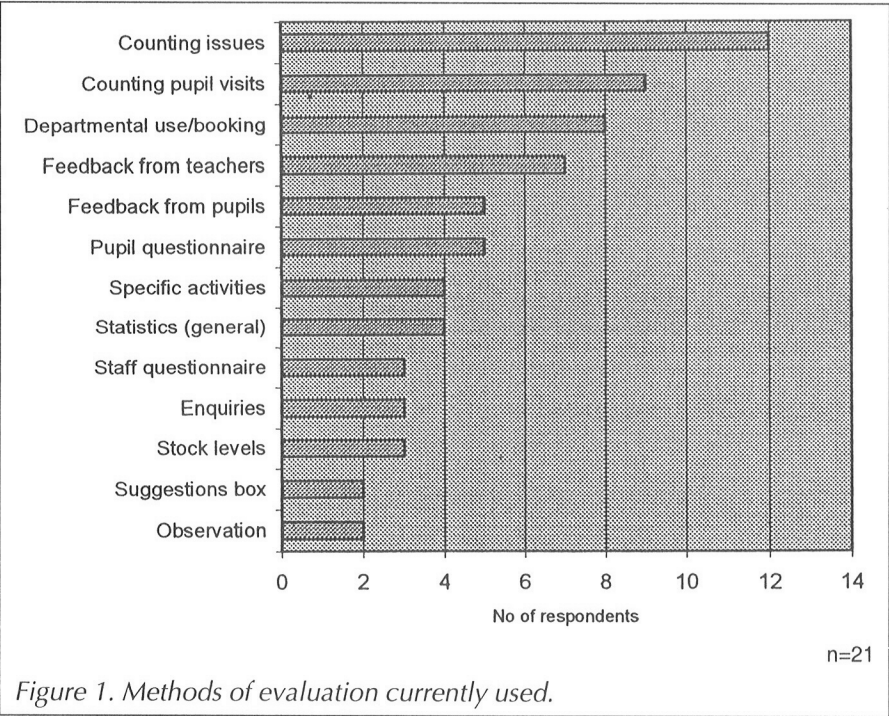


Figure 1 shows the most common methods of evaluation mentioned. Others referred to by single respondents were: interviews with pupils, self-assessment, ICT audits, budget monitoring, photographs, examples of pupils’ work, feedback from library staff, and open meetings.

Collecting statistics was the most frequently reported evaluation activity. This was seen as easy to do, especially if statistics were available from a library management system, and also easy for others such as managers, teachers, and governors to understand. The precise data collected varied from school to school. Issue figures were often analyzed by pupil categories such as year group or gender, thus allowing the librarian to use the information to target specific groups. Others broke down the figures by resource category such as nonfiction and fiction stock or subject area. Counts of individual pupil visits to the library usually took place at lunchtimes, but might also be carried out during lessons or study periods or before and after school. These figures were generally collated on a daily or weekly basis and could then be used to identify patterns in library use. However, as some respondents pointed out, without an electronic counter it was not practical to carry out a head count regularly, especially at times when the library was at its busiest. Records of library bookings made by each subject department were another common measure and could be used to identify those departments that the librarian might wish to target to encourage greater library use.

Some respondents attempted to use statistics to measure improvement, for example, by comparing year-on-year figures, and in other schools, stock levels were sometimes compared with local or national recommended figures in order to assess provision against a common standard. However, library staff were clearly aware that statistics gave only a partial picture; statistics cannot provide information about how well pupils used the information or about the impact of the library on learning, for example.

In the Beacon schools, the types of information collected were broadly similar. In most schools, the library stock was evaluated in relation to the needs of pupils (age, ability, gender, interests); the demands of the English National Curriculum; and more general considerations such as the balance between fiction and nonfiction. Most schools also considered the use made of the library and its resources, for example, by looking at records of book issues, use of ICT, and departmental use. In addition to aggregated data regarding use of the library, there were also examples of schools collecting more qualitative information about individual pupils, for example, reading habits, to help to evaluate the impact of the library on individuals.

Feedback from teachers and pupils were the forms of qualitative evaluation most frequently mentioned by school librarians. In many cases, this was done on a fairly informal basis, for example, through a suggestions box or by noting anecdotal comments from pupils and staff. However, some respondents had used pupil, and in a few cases staff, questionnaires. One argued that questionnaires were useful because, being anonymous, they allowed users to give feedback more freely. Another saw them as a way to involve pupils in the development of the library:

Evaluation by students provides valuable qualitative input and its strength is that they are given a say in library management.

Although qualitative analysis was clearly time-consuming, some library staff argued that it was possible to carry out in relation to specific activities or projects, which were linked to library or whole-school priorities. Although one respondent questioned the reliability of this type of evidence, arguing it might be "rather subjective," most acknowledged that there was a need for both qualitative and quantitative data, as:

No one method can give an accurate picture. Each has its own strengths.

The lack of techniques to evaluate the impact of libraries is not a problem that is limited to the schools sector. Perhaps the main challenge of this project was to devise a model that helped librarians to collect qualitative data and examine the impact of the library on teaching and learning.

A Standard Approach to School Library Evaluation

Several respondents to the questionnaire for school library staff felt that the methods they currently used were not sufficiently robust to be used effectively to argue for funding or other aspects of library development. Although

evidence of the impact of the library on learning was crucial to secure the support of teaching staff for library use and development, the difficulty of isolating the role of the library from the myriad other influences on learning was widely acknowledged. It was thought that a set of standard, widely accepted methods of school library evaluation would be extremely valuable in working toward this. However, these would need to be widely accepted by staff in individual schools and the educational community as a whole.

From the responses from Beacon schools, it was clear that there was no consistent approach to the evaluation of the library, even in schools with expertise in this field. Indeed, the importance attached to the evaluation of the library varied considerably from school to school, and many headteachers were unsure how to incorporate the library into the whole-school evaluation.

Uses of Evaluation Findings

Questionnaire respondents were keen to use evaluation to improve library provision or, as one librarian said, to “drive the next phase of development.” The responses of the Beacon school headteachers highlight the importance of considering library self-evaluation as an integral part of whole-school self-evaluation and also of using the findings to inform future planning to ensure that the library has maximum impact on teaching and learning. The main ways that evaluation findings might be used are listed and described below.

- Inspection;
- Planning development;
- Funding decisions;
- Improving working practices;
- Improving morale;
- Raising awareness;
- Comparison;
- Professional development and advocacy.

The pressure to provide evidence to convince external inspectors of the contribution made by the library is often the driving force behind evaluation. Evaluation is acknowledged to be good practice that would place the library in a similar position to other departments. Several respondents pointed out that evaluation was just one aspect of the development planning cycle and that the findings should be used to formulate the annual library improvement plan. The theme of identifying where improvement was needed through evaluation was one that was developed by a number of respondents. For example, in one school, the information skills program had been revised, and evaluation had helped several library staff to make decisions about the purchase of new stock. One commented,

I frequently act on the comments and suggestions of the pupils. The stocktake is always used in relation to buying new stock.

Changes to the physical environment of the library were sometimes an upshot of evaluation. For example, in one school, an evaluation report led to plans to expand the library to incorporate a multimedia learning resource centre and cinema. Some respondents reported that evaluation findings had been used to justify previous funding and also to make a case for additional funds or increased staffing levels. Several librarians had secured small amounts of additional funding as a result of presenting their evaluation to the headteacher or the governing body. This might take the form of an increase in the overall library budget or extra funding for specific resources or equipment such as shelving, a security system, or ICT resources. One respondent had used the evaluation findings to demonstrate that extra staffing was required in the library during busy periods. Several librarians had managed to have their position regraded as a result of demonstrating the value of the library and their role in school improvement.

In addition to having a strategic role, evaluation was seen as a practical tool to allow library staff to "assess how different strategies are working on a day-to-day basis" and continually make improvements to the services offered to staff and pupils, for example, by altering opening hours or setting up a quiet reading area. One librarian decided to target the promotion of fiction to older pupils after evaluation had identified this as an area in need of improvement. Based on evidence of departmental use, others had focused on subjects that were found to be underusing the library.

It was thought that teaching as well as library staff might draw on evaluation findings to review how they currently used the library and consider new ways they might make use of library services and resources as part of their teaching. As well as identifying those areas where improvement is needed, evaluation can allow library staff to "appreciate the things we are doing well." A number of respondents referred to the personal satisfaction they derived from identifying the contribution they were making to school improvement, and many saw evaluation in terms of their own professional development.

Although librarians might feel instinctively that the library made a significant contribution to school improvement, evaluation was seen as a way to prove this to themselves and to others. It was thought that by demonstrating success and highlighting effective use of the library, librarians could raise the profile and status of the library. As one put it, "Evaluation is a method to change minds." Evaluation, therefore, was seen to have an awareness-raising role, demonstrating the importance of the library in the school, to pupils, teachers, the headteacher, and governors. In the majority of schools, the evaluation findings were presented to senior managers and governors. In some cases, the information was shared with heads of department, the Library Committee, and other school staff. Some types of evaluation might be used to promote the school to parents and the local community.

It was thought that evaluation might allow headteachers and library staff to compare library provision in their school with that in similar schools in terms of size, intake, funding, and so forth, locally and nationally. Some respondents thought that by aggregating evaluation data, the profile of school libraries might be raised in the wider education and library communities. The information could be used to lobby for better provision, increased salaries, and other improvements. One commented on the role of evaluation in the development of the profession as a whole, and it was suggested that evaluation could be used to assist organizations that represent library professionals and provide advice to practitioners.

Support for Library Staff Carrying Out Self-Evaluation

A lack of training in evaluation techniques was identified as a problem faced by librarians, especially in relation to the use of qualitative methods. In general, librarians were used to collecting statistics, but had less experience of dealing with qualitative data. Although the self-evaluation process is designed to be carried out without the need for a significant level of additional support, it is likely that some library staff, especially those for whom evaluation is a new area of work, may require training or perhaps more informal support from another librarian or a teacher.

Several respondents felt that it was helpful to have support in evaluating their own library, whether this was from a colleague at another school or the SLS. As one respondent said,

Sometimes objectivity is lacking; it's almost as if I know my library too well.

SLSs are likely to be particularly important in supporting primary schools, as few are likely to have staff with sufficient time or expertise to carry out self-evaluation without external support. Whether it is through SLSs or more informally, it is important that school librarians have opportunities to support each other, for example, by sharing good practice and acting as critical friends, external sources of support prepared to challenge and criticize as necessary. Links with other schools were seen as important in order to share ideas, whether on a local basis or through national case studies. As one respondent pointed out,

Being a school librarian is quite lonely—you need to find ways to mesh in with the curriculum departments and to form partnerships with other libraries in the area. It is important to share information and experience and to do so often.

The Overall Approach Adopted

Based on the findings from these surveys and on additional input from the SLWG, the research team decided to base the overall frameworks for both the primary and secondary self-evaluation models on the OFSTED *Framework for Inspecting Schools in England* (Pilot version, July 2002). From September 2003, OFSTED's (2002) *Framework for Inspecting Schools* will "take greater account

of school self-evaluation to inform inspection." As the current OFSTED guidelines point out, although inspection reports often mention school libraries, "the text often gives too little emphasis to their role in the school's curriculum provision and their contribution to standards of attainment and to teaching and learning" (OFSTED, 2001).

It was hoped that by basing the models on the *OFSTED Framework*, the models would more readily gain the respect of teachers, headteachers, OFSTED inspectors, governors, and others in the education sector. The language and terms used in the models were chosen to reflect those familiar to educators. This was felt to be important to ensure that the audience for self-evaluation clearly understood the process and the findings.

Both models use the first eight Key Questions of the *OFTSED Framework*, although some of these were adapted slightly to ensure that they directly addressed the needs of the school library. The themes developed for each Key Question reflect the areas that inspectors must evaluate, with issues of particular concern to the work of the library being included under the most appropriate Key Question.

The models are designed to cover all aspects of library provision that schools might wish to evaluate. Schools are not expected to use the whole model; rather, to select the theme(s) that are most relevant to their needs and concerns and to the priorities of the school as a whole. The two models are intended to reflect the differing nature of library provision common in primary and secondary phase schools, but are designed to be flexible enough to be tailored to meet the needs of all schools. It is hoped that the models will provide a helpful structure and sufficient guidance to allow evidence demonstrating the impact of the library on teaching and learning to be collected, for example, by the provision of lists of questions to ask pupils and staff and checklists for observation and written work.

The Next Stage

The models devised by the research team were piloted by the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL) in spring 2003. The findings from this will be used by the DfES to amend the models as necessary to ensure that they are practical tools that cater for the differing staffing arrangements and types of library that exist in schools in England. It is hoped that the piloting process will suggest how school library self-evaluation can be smoothly incorporated into working practices and ensure that the models are adopted widely, thus enabling all schools to evaluate the current quality and effectiveness of their school library, identify the main strengths and weaknesses, and secure the continual improvement of library provision.

Discussion

Whereas some school library staff are clearly keen to evaluate the library and have a clear appreciation of the value of doing so, others may be more reluctant to regard this as an integral part of their job. There is, therefore, a

need to persuade all library staff of the benefits of carrying out evaluation. It is not sufficient that the librarians alone are convinced of the benefits of evaluating the school library; those in the wider education community also need to be persuaded. Perhaps the most important group to convince are headteachers, as without their backing, the impact of any self-evaluation is likely to be limited. It is vital that headteachers are persuaded of the importance of an effective school library that is adequately staffed and funded and is an integral part of the school evaluation process. It is hoped that the self-evaluation models themselves will help to convince all teachers of the essential role played by the library by demonstrating the many ways it can contribute to teaching and learning. The models also suggest a number of "actions for improvement" and provide examples of good practice to help schools to see how the evaluation findings might be used to improve library provision.

Self-evaluation is not an activity that school librarians should be expected to carry out alone. The active involvement of the headteacher and other staff will be crucial in ensuring that the evaluation can be conducted effectively and that the findings feed into whole-school planning. If the value of the library in supporting teaching and learning is to be fully appreciated, it should be seen as an integral part of whole-school self-evaluation. For this reason, there are numerous references in the models to how the library interacts with other parts of the school, and the project report recommends that references to the use of the library are included in all departmental and whole-school self-evaluation documents. The impact of library provision on teaching and learning should be routinely evaluated in any whole-school self-evaluation and should feature strongly in the evaluation of certain aspects of the school such as literacy or ICT.

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Author Note

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Appendix A Questionnaire for Library Staff

School Libraries Self-Evaluation Model

Centre for Information Research, University of Central England

Questions for librarian/teacher-in-charge of library

1. Job title:
2. Number of hours per week devoted to library duties:
3. Other library staff at school:
4. Number of pupils at school:
5. Age range of pupils:
6. Do you consider the evaluation of the impact of the school library to be a worthwhile activity? YES/NO
For what reason(s)?
7. What informal and formal methods of evaluation do you currently use? (If none, please go to question 18).

Questions for library staff conducting evaluation

8. Why did you initially decide to evaluate your school library?
9. What do you consider to be the main strengths of the method(s) used?

10. What do you consider to be the main weaknesses of the method(s) used?
11. What theme(s) does the evaluation focus on? E.g., impact on teaching and learning; level of resource provision; library management.
12. Why were these themes chosen?
13. What types of data are collected? E.g., statistics, pupil/staff comments, examples of pupils' work
14. How does the evaluation processes fit into existing working practices? E.g., who conducts the evaluation? How regularly is it carried out?
15. How (and to whom) are the findings of the evaluation presented?
16. Have you or anyone else acted on any of the findings of the evaluation? What changes have been made as a result?
17. Do you have any plans to change your method of evaluating the library in the future?

Questions for all respondents

18. Are you aware of any evaluation tools or techniques for school libraries, other than those you currently use? YES/NO
Do you have any opinions regarding the usefulness or relevance of these?
19. What aspects of school library provision do you feel have the greatest impact on teaching, learning and attainment? E.g., staffing; level of resource provision; information skills delivery.
Please give as much detail as possible.
20. How do anticipate that the findings of a self evaluation process might be used:
 - by library staff
 - by headteachers and governors
 - by professional bodies (library and educational)
 - by government bodies eg OFSTED, DfES.
21. Please give details of the types of information or evidence you anticipate would be most useful to you eg resource provision impact on attainment levels; curriculum structure; partnerships with other schools/libraries.
Please explain why you consider these to be important.
22. What difficulties do you anticipate, or have you experienced, in carrying out evaluation of your school library? E.g., lack of time; lack of skills/training.

Thank you for your time.

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Headteachers at Beacon Schools

*School Libraries Self-Evaluation Model**Centre for Information Research, University of Central England**Questions for headteachers/SMT (Beacon Schools)*

Name of school:

1. Does evaluation of the school library form part of whole-school self-evaluation?

If not, please say why not?

If the school library is evaluated, please answer the following questions.

2. Please explain what part the evaluation of the school library plays in overall school evaluation.
3. Please give details of the evaluation method(s) used.
Who is responsible for the evaluation?
What types of data/evidence are collected?
What are the main themes that are investigated?
4. Have the findings of the evaluation led to any changes in terms of the development or management of the library? Please give details of
 - The indicators/themes investigated and their relationship to overall aims of the school
 - The types of evidence which were influential
 - Actions taken as a result.
5. Has the information collected been used by or presented to any external bodies e.g., OFSTED? Has this had any direct impact on the school library?

Thank you for your time.