

# The Role of the Principal in an Information Literate School Community: Cross-Country Comparisons from an International Research Project

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*An international research project conducted in Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Japan, Scotland, and South Korea investigated the role of principals in developing and supporting information-literate school communities. Principals and teacher-librarians completed three survey instruments examining the participants' perceptions and beliefs about their current and future roles, and their views on such concerns as the strengths and challenges of the school library, the contributions of teacher-librarians to teaching and learning, the nature of information literacy, and barriers to integration of information skills. In this paper, the researchers explore the findings of the research project and present cross-country comparisons.*

## Background

Oberg, Hay, and Henri describe the development of an international research project that has investigated the role of the principal in relation to school library programs and services (forthcoming). The research has its roots in qualitative work done in Canada and Australia (see for example, LaRocque and Oberg, 1990, 1991; Oberg 1996; Hay and Henri, 1995; Henri and Hay 1996). The international research project was conducted in seven countries: Australia, Canada, Scotland, Finland, France, Japan, and South Korea. Because of the international context of this research, the authors have chosen to use the terminology most frequently used in the participating countries and in the research instruments used for the study, that is, "principal," "teacher-librarian," and "school library." However, where appropriate, other local terminology has been used, for direct quotes and in reference to specific local contexts.

Principals and teacher-librarians completed a three-part questionnaire. Instrument 1 asked for information about the school context of the respondents, their education, and experience. Instrument 2 examined the participants' perceptions and beliefs about their current and future roles. Instrument 3 explored the participants' views on such concerns as the strengths and challenges of the school library, the contributions of teacher-librarians to teaching and learning, the nature of information literacy, and barriers to integration of information skills. A report home

page, including data analysis reports and papers on initial research findings from the participating countries is available at <http://farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/principal/survey/report.html>.

Information on the development and administration of the international research project has been provided in the paper cited above (Oberg, Hay, and Henri, forthcoming).

In this paper, the authors begin by providing information about the parameters of the studies conducted in the seven participating countries as well as information about the educational systems and school library provision in those countries with examples from the findings for individual countries and the cross-country comparative analysis. An earlier version of this paper was presented as part of the Third International Research Forum in School Librarianship, held at the joint conference of the American Association of School Librarians and the International Association of School Librarianship in Birmingham, Alabama (Oberg, Hay, and Henri, 1999).

## Study Parameters in Participating Countries

The researchers in each country defined the parameters of the study in their country in the way most appropriate to their local contexts. There were no attempts at countrywide surveys. In several cases, the study had to take into account that not all schools available for selection had teacher-librarians. In other cases, only secondary schools could be included in the study because elementary schools did not have teacher-librarians.

In Australia the study was conducted within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), a relatively homogenous socio-political area with a population of approximately 310,000. The study included all schools within the ACT—both public and Catholic systems—that employed both a full time principal and a teacher-librarian. There were 191 public schools (with K–6, 7–10, and 11–12 schools) and 55 Catholic schools (with K–6 and 7–12 schools) surveyed.

In Canada the study was conducted in the elementary and secondary schools of the province of Alberta in western Canada. Not all schools in Alberta have teacher-librarians, and no school district in the province is large enough to have 200 schools with teacher-librarians. The sample for this study consisted of 252 schools scattered across the province, each with a teacher-librarian assigned at least half-time to the school library program.

In Finland the study was conducted in 86 upper-secondary schools in the south. The Helsinki region (including Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, and Kauniainen), the only metropolitan area in Finland with a population of more than one million, was the target area of the research. Two towns to the north of Helsinki, Tampere (population of 180,000) and Lahti (population of 70,000), were also included. Lahti is a town with experimental, mixed upper-secondary and vocational schools and is well known for its school library development.

In Scotland virtually all state secondary schools (those with students aged 11–18) have professional librarians who are referred to as “school librarians.” The study included only state secondary schools, since primary schools in Scotland do not have school librarians and some schools in the private sector do not have qualified librarians. Two hundred schools (50% of all secondary schools in Scotland), with an even balance of rural and urban schools, received the questionnaire.

In Japan the study was conducted in 40 high schools serving students aged 15–18 in Tokyo, an urban context, and in 60 primary and junior high schools serving students aged 6–14 in northern and central Japan, a rather rural area.

In South Korea the study was conducted across the 11 high school districts of Seoul, in the 141 high schools that have teacher-librarians. All of the high schools in Seoul do not have teacher-librarians; in all of Korea there are 252 teacher-librarians, 175 of whom are in high schools.

In France the study was conducted in two regions, Grenoble and Nice. The researchers contacted one in three of the schools in the two regions. Two hundred ninety-five secondary schools (colleges serving students aged 11–15 and lycées serving students aged 15–18) received the questionnaires. The schools were located in different geographical areas: urban, rural, remote, mountainous, and seaside. The researchers in France completed their own data analysis and reported overall findings at the 1998 IFLA conference. However, the data from that study are not yet available in English.

In summary, in Australia and Canada the studies were conducted in elementary and secondary public and Catholic schools. Each school in the Australian study has a full-time teacher-librarian. Each school in the Canadian study has at least a half-time teacher-librarian. In Finland, Scotland, France, South Korea, and Japan, the studies were conducted in secondary public schools. Most of the schools in the Finland study have a part-time teacher-librarian. Each school in the studies in Scotland, South Korea, and Japan have a full-time teacher-librarian.

## **Educational Systems and School Library Provision in Participating Countries**

Among the seven countries involved in the research project, there are great variances in educational systems and provision for and staffing of school libraries. In Japan and Korea, public education is organized at the national level and administered in a hierarchical fashion. In Australia, Canada, Scotland, and Finland, the trend is to decentralize educational decision making. Readers need to keep these differences in mind in looking at the findings from the individual countries and the cross-country comparisons. Some of these variances are illustrated in two ways: first by providing a description of some special features of the educational system and school libraries in Finland, and then by comparing some aspects of the educational systems and school libraries in Australia and Canada.

In Finland the Ministry of Education is the central national coordinating body for Finnish education. The Finnish education system is comprised of compulsory comprehensive schools (grades 1–9), post-compulsory general education and vocational schools (grades 10–12), higher education, and adult education. The municipal authorities have specific responsibility for schools providing grade 1–12 education. Recently the whole Finnish education system has undergone a profound change. A new educational legislation took effect in 1999. Finland is moving away from a rigid and highly centralized system of top-down administration and towards a more flexible system of decentralized decision-making. This means much greater autonomy for educational institutions. Officially there are no school libraries in Finland because the network of public libraries are considered to be sufficient for the needs of school children. However, most schools do have libraries. Most are run 1-5 hours per week, usually by teachers without library

qualifications; however, there are a growing number of very modern libraries called learning support centers or information centers in the vocational schools and the new polytechnics. In 1999 education legislation, school libraries were mentioned for the first time ever: “In a school there can be a school library for achieving the pedagogical goals of the school. The school library will be financed by the budget of the school.”

In both Australia and Canada, education is a state or provincial matter and a decentralized decision-making model prevails. The provincial or state ministry of education sets the goals of schooling, establishes curriculum guidelines and requirements, and evaluates student learning. The means by which goals are met and curricula are implemented are left to local decision makers at the school or regional jurisdiction level. The involvement of the national government is stronger in Australia than in Canada; in recent years, the Australian government has attempted to provide a national agenda. Government funding for education at all levels has declined significantly in the last decade in both Australia and Canada, but there are considerable variances in school library provision in the two countries. In Australia, for example, the status of teacher-librarianship is strong. The majority of secondary schools employ at least one teacher as a full-time teacher-librarian who is likely to be qualified in information studies. However, many primary schools in Australia do not employ a full-time teacher-librarian and it is more likely that this teacher will not have undertaken a university course in information studies. By contrast, in Alberta, where the Canadian study was conducted, the status of teacher-librarianship is much weaker. Only about 15% of the elementary and secondary schools have more than a half-time teacher-librarian, and only about half of those teacher-librarians are qualified in information studies. In both Australia and Canada, however, teacher-librarians are expected to work in collaboration with teachers and principals to develop information-literacy programs for students. Schools that identify their teacher-librarian as an educational leader who is information-technology literate are likely to be expanding the traditional role, and the teacher-librarian may well be the school’s information technology coordinator.

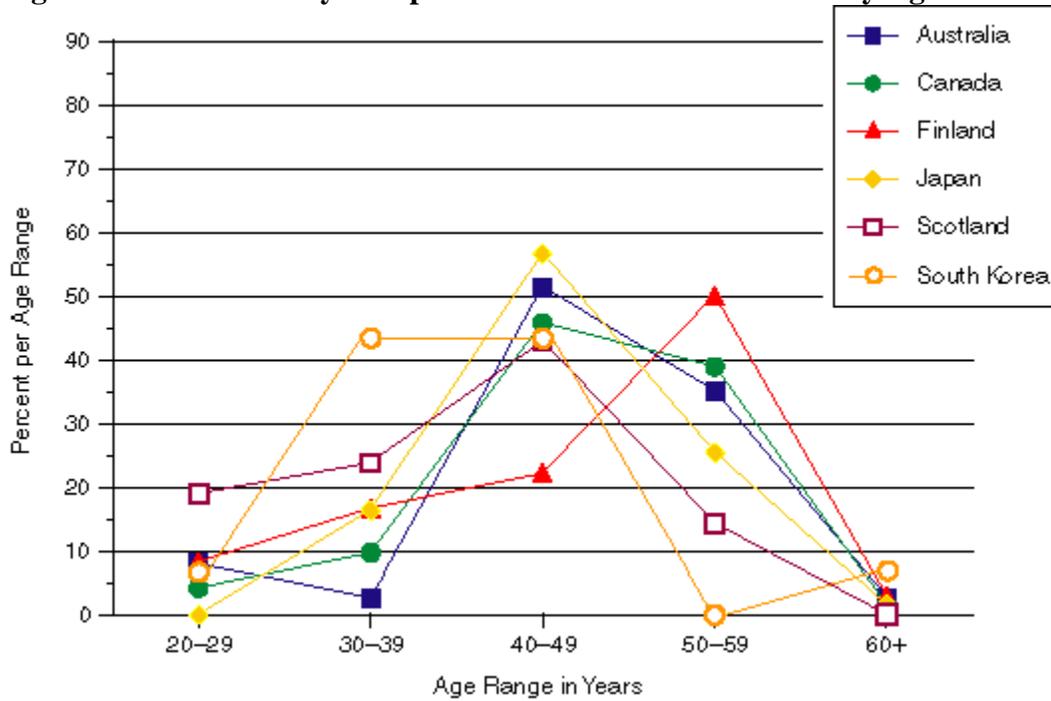
## Findings

### Cross-Country Comparisons from Instrument 1 Data

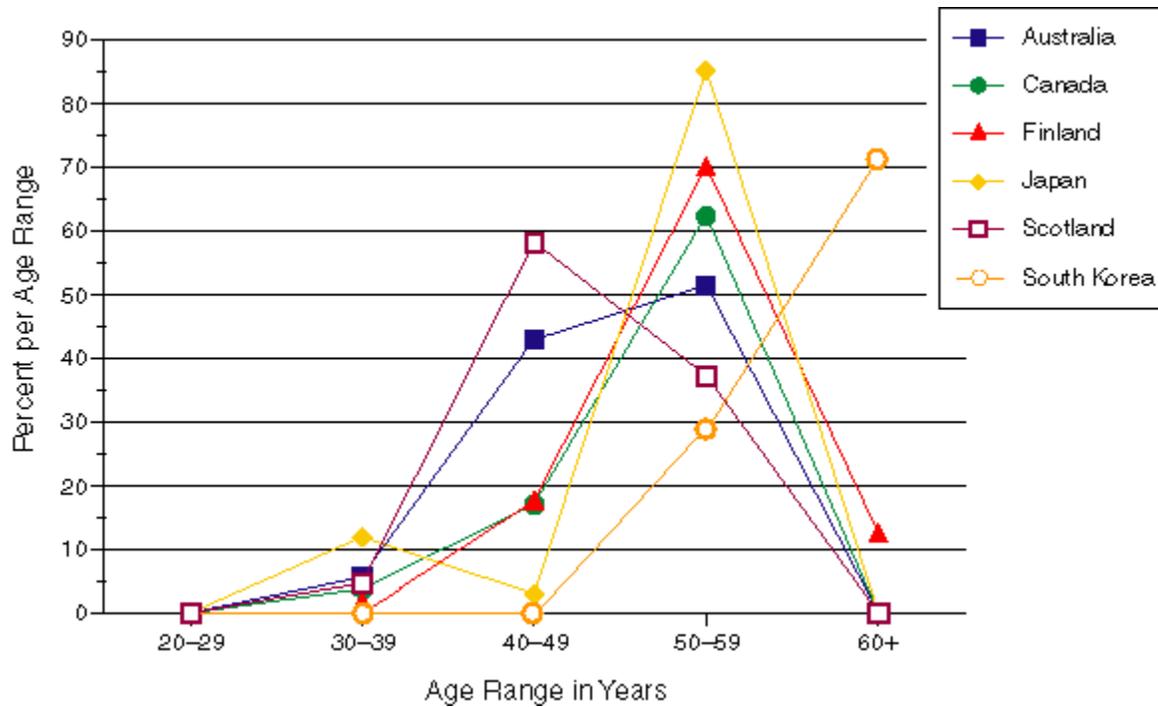
Across all of the countries in the research project, most principals are male and most teacher-librarians are female. This gender difference is significant for all of the countries in the study, even though the actual gender percentages vary from country to country. The percentages range from 57% in Australia to 88% in Japan for male principals and from 74% in France to 100% in Australia for female teacher-librarians. Because these figures are not derived from a countrywide survey, they should not be regarded as representative of the country as a whole. For example, for Australia, 80% of teacher-librarians would be female, rather than 100% as was the case in the study respondents.

Across the countries, most principals are older than most teacher-librarians. Most principals are in their fifties and most teacher-librarians are in their forties. The exceptions were in South Korea where most principals are over sixty, in Finland where most teacher-librarians were in their fifties, and in Scotland where most principals are in their forties. Cross-country comparisons of *teacher-librarian age* and *principal age* are presented in figures 1 and 2.

**Figure 1. Cross-Country Comparisons of Teacher-Librarians by Age**



**Figure 2. Cross-Country Comparisons of Principals by Age**



## Cross Country Comparisons from Instrument 2 Data

### Overall Mean Scores for Perceptions and Beliefs

In order to get an overall comparison of the data across the countries and to test the correlations between the responses of teacher-librarians and principals in those countries, overall mean scores were calculated for present perceptions, future perceptions, and beliefs for the teacher-librarians and the principals in each country. The overall mean scores were obtained by adding together the means of the questions and statements using the 5-point rating scales for part A: perception factors (0=no comment, 1=none, 2=a little, 3=some, 4=a lot), and part B: belief factors (0=no comment, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree). The overall means and p-values for comparisons are reported in table 1.

**Table 1. Teacher-Librarian and Principal Overall Mean Scores, Present and Future Perceptions, Based on Total Mean Scores for All Questions**

	Australia	Canada	Finland	Japan	South Korea	Scotland
<b>Present Perceptions</b>						
Teacher-librarian, mean	88.710	95.750	66.000	71.720	73.890	73.830
Principal, mean	103.030	107.140	77.880	84.070	81.760	87.070
p-value	.001	.003	.008	.001	.038	.004
<b>Future Perceptions</b>						
Teacher-librarian, mean	104.290	96.850	85.190	86.990	82.700	94.670
Principal, mean	108.800	111.830	85.480	103.490	96.950	98.590
p-value	.254	.003	.956	.000	.001	.430
<b>Beliefs</b>						
Teacher-librarian, mean	62.550	64.480	41.310	55.970	56.680	56.070
Principal, mean	60.600	64.290	44.830	60.040	54.530	50.640
p-value	.154	.890	.169	.019	.208	.001

Based on the above overall mean scores for present perceptions, principals and teacher-librarians in all countries but South Korea differed significantly on the amount of time they perceived the principal to spend on tasks. The four main tasks with a significant amount of disagreement included:

- Advocating and facilitating the development of an information-literate school community
- Demonstrating support for collaboration among the teacher-librarian and teaching staff

- ensuring that the teacher-librarian has an appropriate allocation of support staff
- allocating adequate, flexible time for the teacher-librarian to administer the Learning Resource Center

However, in all countries, principals viewed themselves as spending more time or slightly more time on tasks than did the teacher-librarians.

According to the overall mean scores for future perceptions, the principals and teacher-librarians in Australia, Finland, and Scotland were similar in regards to the amount of time they thought the principal should spend on tasks in the future. In Canada, Japan, and South Korea, however, there was a significant difference between the two groups; the principals believed they should spend more time on the tasks in the future than did the teacher-librarians. For example, in Canada principals and teacher-librarians differed significantly regarding how much time they think the principal should be spending in the future on 7 out of a possible 31 tasks identified in part A of instrument 2. South Korea's respondent groups differed significantly with over one-third (42%, or 13 out of a possible 31 tasks), while Japan differed significantly on nearly two-thirds (63%) of tasks. The following tasks were common to these three countries where the principal's and teacher-librarian's perceptions and beliefs significantly differed:

- Advocating and facilitating the development of an information literate school community
- Informing new staff about the importance of collaborating with the teacher-librarian
- Encouraging teachers to incorporate the learning and use of a range of information skills into their teaching programs and to assess process skills as well as content

For each of these tasks teacher-librarians thought that their principal could give “a little – some” more attention to these tasks, whereas the principals felt they should give “a lot” more attention to these tasks. This suggests that the teacher-librarian has a relatively low expectation regarding the information literacy advocacy role of the principal in the school.

Overall mean scores suggest that in five of the six countries principals and teacher-librarians are well aligned in their beliefs. The exception is Scotland, where school librarians are not qualified teachers. This finding is of particular interest to the school library profession in the United Kingdom, as James Herring (1998, 3-4), our researcher from Scotland observed:

The school librarians and headteachers differed in that

- Headteachers agreed that school librarians should have dual qualifications but school librarians did not agree
- Headteachers believed that cooperative planning and teaching should take place in the library and in the classroom
- Headteachers did not agree that the school librarian should be an IT leader in the school.

These disagreements are surprising to this author and it would be interesting to see if the same results occurred from a larger response. If it is true that headteachers favour dual qualifications for Scottish school librarians, then this would raise an issue that has lain dormant in the UK for a number of years. The school librarians' disagreement on the issue of cooperative planning and teaching in the library and the classroom is surprising and, if this reflects a wide held belief, is worrying. School librarians are encouraged to plan cooperatively with teachers and not just with

regard to the library. Also, if headteachers do believe that school librarians should not be IT leaders in the school, then school librarians need to make headteachers more aware of their IT skills.

### Overall Task Priorities for Principals

The researchers next looked at the means for each of the questions related to tasks that the principals might carry out in support of the development of an information-literate school community (questions 1-31). Both principals and teacher-librarians rated each of the tasks in terms of the time and attention that the principal was giving the task at present and in terms of the time and attention that the principal should give the task in future. Table 2 provides a cross-country comparison of teacher-librarian and principal present versus future perceptions based on T-tests results. Those tasks identified as requiring significantly more attention by principals in future are identified.

**Table 2. Activities Identified as Requiring Significantly More Attention from Principals in the Future**

No.	Question	Canada		Australia		Finland		Scotland		South Korea		Japan	
		TL	PR	TL	PR	TL	PR	TL	PR	TL	PR	TL	PR
1	Facilitate development of ILSC					•		•		•		•	
2	Ensure information literacy in school plan			•		•		•		•		•	
3	Facilitate professional development (PD) of staff											•	
4	Advocate TL role in school curriculum					•				•		•	
5	Support collaboration between TL and staff					•						•	
6	Ensure SLRC reflects school goals					•				•			
7	Ensure appropriate allocation of support staff							•					
8	Allocate adequate, flexible time for TL											•	
9	Encourage staff involvement in development of SLRC					•		•		•		•	

10	Encourage staff invest time to CPPT with TL	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
11	Facilitate staff PD in understanding and use of IT				•		•	•	•	•
12	Inform new staff re importance of collaboration with TL	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
13	Support currency/relevancy of SLRC collection			•			•	•	•	•
14	Encourage staff debate regarding information policy	•	•	•	•			•	•	•
15	Ensure significant funding allocated to SLRC budget			•				•	•	•
16	Seek outside funding to supplement SLRC budget	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
17	Engage in regular/timely communication with TL					•		•	•	•
18	Visit SLRC to observe work of TL			•			•	•		
19	Encourage TL to debate/justify current practice		•					•	•	•
20	Ask questions of TL regarding teaching and learning						•		•	•
21	Rely on TL to keep PR abreast of developments regarding TL role	•						•		•
22	Seek advice from TL regarding whole school information management	•				•			•	•
23	Encourage TL to take risks							•	•	•
24	Encourage staff to use wide range of resources in teaching		•			•	•	•	•	•
25	Encourage TL leadership in development of information skills continuum					•	•		•	•
26	Work with TL to develop his/her personal PD plan			•	•	•	•	•	•	•



- Encouraging the teaching staff to invest time in cooperatively planning and teaching with the teacher-librarian (Q.10) (9/12)
- Actively seeking outside school funding possibilities that can be used to supplement the library resource center budget (Q.16) (9/12)
- Seeking feedback from staff about their impressions of the quality of library resource centre services (Q.31) (9/12)
- Working with the teacher-librarian to develop the teacher-librarian's personal professional development plan (Q.26) (8/12)

### Top Ten Present and Future Perception Factors

Based on the above summary, the researchers then organized the 31 perception items in order from the highest to lowest means for each respondent group to identify those tasks considered of highest priority within, and then across, countries. Those items that did not rate a ranking score (i.e., were not identified in any country's top ten priority list) were automatically eliminated. These included questions 10, 12, 20, and 31. The top-ten priority present and future items for principals and teacher-librarians in each country were entered onto a spreadsheet. The sum total of ranks was calculated and items with a rank occurrence of less than 7 out of a possible 12 occurrences were eliminated. Of the items remaining, the overall task priorities were identified by mean rankings. Mean rankings were calculated by combining the numerical value of the rankings for each item and then dividing by the number of occurrences. The highest possible mean ranking was 1 if all principals and teacher-librarians had chosen the same item as their highest or first priority. Table 3 identifies the overall top-ten tasks listed according to highest mean ranking.

**Table 3. Top Ten Priority Tasks, Present and Future, by Mean Rankings**

No.	Question	Japan		South Korea		Scotland		Finland		Canada		Australia		Sum Total Rank	Mean Occurrence														
		TL		PR		TL		PR		TL		PR																	
		P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F																
3	Facilitate professional development (PD) of staff	3				1	2	5	2	2	4	1	2	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	3	1	6	1	1	45	2.14		
13	Support currency/relevancy of SLRC collection					3	4	6				1	1	2	1	3		5	6	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	5	55	3.06
1	Facilitate development of ILSC	5	4	4	1	7	4	3	1	10	2		3	2	1	3	3	4	4	2	3	2	1	10	9	88	3.83		
2	Ensure information literacy in school plan																												
		2	2	2		4	6	4	5		7	9	6	5	3	6	5	3	1	5	2	10	3	9	6	105	4.77		



## Overall Beliefs for Principals and Teacher-Librarians

The researchers also looked at the means for each of the belief statements in part B of instrument 2 (Q. 32–50 for principals, and 32–53 for teacher-librarians). Both principals and teacher-librarians rated each statement by the strength of their agreement and disagreement regarding principal and teacher-librarian roles and responsibilities in supporting the development of an information-literate school community. The same ranking process used to identify the top-ten perception factors was used to identify the highest priority beliefs within and across countries. According to their means, the researchers ranked the eighteen belief statements common to both principal and teacher-librarians. Those items that did not rate a ranking score (i.e., were not identified in any country's top ten priority list) were automatically eliminated. These included Question 38 in the common beliefs section and Question 52 on the teacher-librarian instrument. The top ten priority belief items for principals and teacher-librarians in each country were entered onto a spreadsheet. The sum total of ranks was calculated, and items with a rank occurrence of less than 7 out of a possible 12 occurrences were eliminated. Of the items remaining, the overall task priorities were identified by mean rankings.

Table 4 identifies the overall top five belief statements listed according to highest priority. The top three common beliefs, identified by principals and teacher-librarians across the countries were: Internet access should be available through the school library (Q.41); the teacher-librarian should provide a flexible timetable for needs of individuals, groups, and whole classes (Q.40); and the teacher-librarian ought to be appointed according to a merit selection process (Q.34).

**Table 4. Top Five Common Beliefs, by Mean Rankings**

No	Common Belief Statements	Australia		Canada		Finland		Japan		Scotland		South Korea		Total Rank	Mean Occurrence
		TL	PR	TL	PR	TL	PR	TL	PR	TL	PR	TL	PR		
41	Internet access should be available through the SLRC	6	4	1	3	1	2	7	1	1	1			27	2.7
40	TL should provide flexible timetable		8	2	3			4	6	1	3			27	3.857
34	TL ought to be appointed using a merit selection process	7	6			5	3				4	2	1	28	4
32	TL as a key player in	1	2	3	1	6	8	10	7	4	1	6		49	4.455

	school's information literacy programs														
33	TL ought to have education and librarianship qualification	2	1	9	7	6	4	8	9		9	1	2	58	5.273

It is interesting to note that only South Korea did not rate Internet access in its top ten beliefs; instead the principals and teacher-librarian showed significant alignment in their top two beliefs, the merit selection process for teacher-librarians (Q.34) and the need for dual qualifications in education and librarianship for the teacher-librarian (Q.33). In Scotland, by contrast, both school librarians and principals strongly agreed that Internet access should be available in the school library (ranked number 1 by both groups) but they disagreed on the importance of dual qualifications for school librarians. In fact, the school librarians in Scotland were the only respondent group who did not rank the dual qualification belief in their top-ten list. On the other hand, both principals and teacher-librarians in Australia strongly agreed on dual qualifications for teacher-librarians and they exhibited alignment in viewing the teacher-librarian as a key player in the school's information literacy programs (Q.32). As this discussion illustrates, the overall top beliefs may give a sense of the nature of the school library program and the role of the teacher-librarian and principal as key players in that program, but each country has unique educational and political frameworks that influence beliefs within individual countries.

### Cross-Country Comparisons from Instrument 3

In this section of the paper are presented the findings from instrument 3 from the studies conducted in five of the participating countries, Canada, Australia, Scotland, South Korea, and Finland (see appendix). The data from France are not yet available in English, and the Japan study did not include instrument 3. Readers also should remember that not all participants who responded to instrument 1 and 2 completed instrument 3 and not all those who completed instrument 3 responded to all of the questions in that instrument. For example, in Canada themes for each of the open-ended questions from instrument 3 were derived from the responses of Q.43–47 of the 59 teacher-librarians and Q.18–31 of the 40 principals who participated in the study. However, approximately the same proportion (about 75%) of the teacher-librarian respondents completed the open-ended questions as did the principal respondents.

Responses to the open-ended questions on instrument 3 were analyzed through a process of reading and rereading responses, noting the content of responses, identifying themes or categories according to the content, and then grouping and regrouping the responses within the themes or categories. This interpretive process began with reading all the responses to get an overall sense of the data. Then, each of the open-ended questions was analyzed. Cross-country comparisons were conducted using the same content analysis approach.

In all five countries, two key strengths of the library are an emphasis on supporting staff and students in teaching and learning and the provision of resources and equipment. With the exception of South Korea, there are frequent mentions of trained and qualified staff as a key strength. In Canada and Finland it is important that the library be an environment that is open, inviting, well-organized, and connected to other libraries.

Funding is a challenge high on the list in all five countries. In some countries this reflected the low levels of funding to education as a whole; in others, more specific issues were identified such as low salaries for library staff or competition from IT for a piece of the budget. In all but South Korea, IT represented an important challenge, in terms of the need for constant upgrading of technology and in terms of the demands for staff training and for user education. Support for the library from school administrators and from teachers also is seen as a key challenge in Canada, Scotland, and Finland.

Participants mentioned the provision and organization of information and resources as one of the critical functions of teacher-librarians. All but South Korea identified in-servicing staff and cooperative planning and teaching as the other two critical contributions that teacher-librarians made to the teaching and learning in schools. Principals and teacher-librarians in Canada and Australia differed in the emphasis they placed on these two functions: principals tended to focus on the teacher-librarians' role in professional development, in enabling things to happen, while teacher-librarians tended to focus on the front-line responsibilities of planning, teaching, and evaluating learning as equal partners with other teachers. In Scotland and Australia, the role of the teacher-librarian in IT—both IT management and IT user education—is also seen a very critical.

When asked about the effect of the library being closed for more than two weeks, participants in all of the five countries agreed that there would be losses in access to resources and in the teaching of information skills. They suggested that instructional strategies might become less varied and student-centered and that teachers might rely more on the textbook approach.

The next question asked about the impact of the teacher-librarian being absent for more than two weeks. Participants in three out of four countries (no responses were available from South Korea) agreed that there would be serious declines in the instructional program related to information skills. The majority of the participants from Finland suggested that there would be little impact on teaching and learning. In order to ensure access to the library when the teacher-librarian is absent, participants in Canada and Australia reported that efforts would be made in some schools to hire a replacement with at least teacher qualifications but in Scotland and Finland, no replacement staff would be provided.

The strongest element in the definition of information literacy is the ability to access information from a variety of sources. This element is shared by participants from all five countries. Principals and teacher-librarians in South Korea and Scotland and principals in Australia made special mention of the ability to access information from electronic sources. In all countries but South Korea there is some recognition of the process approach to information access and use but only in Australia is a specific model mentioned with any frequency.

Participants in all five countries acknowledged that teachers' attitudes and beliefs constituted one of the major barriers to the integration of information skills across the curriculum. Time

available for teachers and teacher-librarians to work together was seen a barrier by principals and teacher-librarians in Australia, Scotland, and Finland and by teacher-librarians in Canada. Lack of “top-down support”—limitations in the principal’s understanding and leadership and lack of a school information skills policy or curriculum—was seen as a barrier by all teacher-librarians except in Finland. Educational practices such as compulsory courses with rigid content requirements, university entrance examinations, and government testing programs were seen as barriers by teacher-librarians in South Korea and Canada and by principals in Finland. Funding was seen as a barrier by principals in South Korea, Canada, and Scotland.

## Looking Forward

This paper has begun to explore the richness of the data collected in the participating nations. The comparative analysis has identified some common concerns, priorities, and beliefs of principals and teacher-librarians across a diverse range of educational contexts. Now individual countries can learn from each other regarding programs and strategies that effectively support the development of information literacy in schools. That process has begun, as the following comments from researchers in participating countries illustrate.

[In Korea] the principals believed they spend some time and should spend more time on tasks for an information literate school community in the future . . . However, the teacher-librarians respond that their principals have no concern for the role of the teacher-librarian in the instructional program, and their principals do not have interest in seeking collaboration of the teacher-librarian with respect to issues of whole school information management. Already the facts have been revealed that the principal’s understanding and advocating of the school library is very important for the development of an information literate school community. The Korean principals perceived that the attainment of information literacy is part of the school plan; however, their basic understanding of the school library is not sufficient. (Han 1998, 8)

Strategies for improving cooperation between school librarians and headteachers in relation to the development of information skills in schools should be developed and disseminated to both headteachers and school librarians. A follow up study [in Scotland], either to repeat the questionnaire exercise for those who did not respond or to choose a sample of school librarians and headteachers for interview, should be considered. . . . This study is a valuable contribution to research in the school library/information skills area and has the potential to be of value to school librarians and headteachers in that it highlights the importance of information skills development and the key role which school librarians can play in this area. (Herring 1998, 4)

Principals and school librarians should be equal partners in a shared process. The earlier studies . . . have shown that principal’s support is vital to the well-being and development of the school library. The school librarian should also bear her/his part of the challenge of the educational reform. Above all, the educational policy and the socio-economic factors within each country establish possibilities for school libraries. This research gave some hints for developing Finnish school libraries, whether in collaboration with public libraries or inside schools as the school’s learning resource centers. The results of the research may not be valid for a small amount of the participating schools, but they can

and need to be used for the benefit of Finnish learners and teachers. (Niinikangas 1998, 13)

The Australian findings demonstrate that there is a significant affinity between principals and teacher librarians with respect to information literacy issues. This will allow a concentration on those issues that are seen as contentious and will facilitate the development of a short instrument that could be used to generate data on these key issues. (Henri 1998, 6)

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## Appendix: Findings from Instrument 3

### Findings from Instrument 3 for Canada

Question 1 asked participants to identify the strengths of the library. Principals in Canada emphasized the qualified and cooperative staff, the resources and equipment, and a focus on learning and curriculum; teacher-librarians emphasized the resources and equipment, a focus on learning and curriculum, and an open, inviting, well-organized environment.

Question 2 asked participants to identify the challenges the library faces. Principals and teacher-librarians mentioned financial resources most frequently. Teacher-librarians frequently mentioned two other challenges: lack of support for the library from other educators and difficulties in dealing with constantly changing technology.

Question 3 asked the participants to identify the things that the teacher-librarian does that are critical to the quality of teaching and learning. The three critical functions of the teacher-librarian are inservicing staff, cooperative planning and teaching, and collection development. Overall, the principals and teacher-librarians are in agreement as to the nature of teacher-librarians' contributions to teaching and learning. However, the principals put the strongest emphasis on the inservicing role while the teacher-librarians put the strongest emphasis on the cooperative planning and teaching role.

Question 4 asked how the form and quality of teaching and learning in the school would be affected if the library were to be closed for more than two weeks. Principals most frequently responded that students and teachers would be unable to access the resources that they needed and that this would have a major school-wide impact. Teacher-librarians also mentioned the school-wide impact but were more likely to focus on specific impacts such as students and teachers being unable to access the resources that they needed, less collaboration among staff, reductions in the variety of instructional strategies being used, and decreased recreational reading by students.

Question 5 asked how the form and quality of teaching and learning would be affected if the teacher-librarian were to be absent for more than two weeks. Both principals and teacher-librarians believed, first, that there would be less collaboration among staff and, second, that the instructional program related to the research process would suffer.

Question 6 asked about the arrangements that are made to ensure access to the library when the teacher-librarian is absent. Slightly more than 50% of both principals and teacher-librarians reported that support staff (aide or technician) are left in charge to do the best that they can while the others reported that a substitute teacher (not necessarily a qualified teacher-librarian) supervises the learning resources centre.

Question 7 asked respondents to give their ideas about information literacy. The principals responded to this question with fewer ideas and with less consistency than did teacher-librarians. The most frequent responses from both groups centered around being able to access information from a variety of sources and knowing how to analyze, evaluate and use information. Only teacher-librarians mentioned being able to share knowledge effectively and being able to find answers to questions relevant to one's life as important aspects of information literacy.

Question 8 asked respondents to identify major barriers to the integration of information skills across the curriculum. Teacher-librarians saw time (their own time and teachers' time—25 mentions) as the major barrier to integration. The second barrier (12 mentions each by principals and by teacher-librarians) was teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Tied for third place were lack of funding (mentioned by both groups), lack of principal leadership and understanding (mentioned by teacher-librarians), and focus on test scores instead of critical thinking skills (mentioned by teacher-librarians).

Question 9 asked how the respondents promoted the role of the learning resources center through school committees. The most frequent responses, from principals and teacher-librarians, centered around the teacher-librarians' membership on the internal committees of the school, those responsible for general governance such as faculty council, and those responsible for key aspects of school organization such as professional development, budget, and technology as well as their regular participation in monthly staff meetings. Several principals mentioned that the teacher-librarian represented the school on the school council, the advisory bodies made up of parents and teachers that are mandated for Alberta schools; others mentioned that they supported and defended the position of the teacher-librarian at the system or school district level.

Only teacher-librarians were asked to respond to questions 10 and 11 about maintaining teacher-librarian credibility and about additional support that the principal could provide. Teacher-librarians reported that they maintain their credibility by keeping current in curriculum, instruction, and technology by providing a quality library program through collaboration and services to teachers, by participating in the life of the school including serving on committees, and by staying current in their own field of librarianship. Teacher-librarians in Canada suggested that principals could provide additional supports by increasing financial support for resources, teacher-librarian time, and/or clerical staff time and by advocating for the program through talking about the library program and collaboration in staff meetings and through visiting the library and providing feedback to the teacher-librarian. Nine respondents reported that their principals were very supportive.

### **Findings from Instrument 3 for Australia**

The principals and librarians in the Australian study were in strong agreement that the strengths of the library are: collections that support resource-based learning and are receptive to user needs; staffing that is qualified and approachable; and a focus on teaching and learning. The latter included integration of information technology (IT) and information skills across the curriculum, offering professional development to teaching staff, taking the initiative with use of technology, and forging collegiality through cooperative planning and teaching (CPT) and resource-based learning.

One of the key challenges is school population. Declining enrollments in many schools places pressure on the number of days that a librarian is employed, while large schools found that the librarian to student ratio is inadequate. Another challenge is facilities: many libraries are not centrally located, are unable to offer the range of spaces needed, and lack adequate Internet connections. Frequent changes in technology and curriculum create difficulties in funding and training. Maintaining the focus on teaching and learning is a challenge because of the emphasis on technology and because of inadequate support staff. Budgets are shrinking and where no money is earmarked for library, the influence of the librarian is vital. If the librarian are not

qualified, energetic, and very proactive, resources might be shifted from library. When librarians are part-time or underqualified, their influence is greatly reduced.

The critical functions of the librarian, according to both principals and librarians, are: professional development of teaching staff; collegiality; collection management; process orientation; and IT expertise. While the IT focus could be seen as a part of each of the preceding categories, there is a sense that it also stands alone. Both principals and librarians suggest that the librarian's role as an IT expert—even as the IT manager—is critical to the quality of teaching and learning. The differences between principals and librarian comes down to a difference in emphasis. Principals in the main tend to see the librarian as a key support, resource, and facilitator—but largely as a professional who enables things to happen. The librarians tend to emphasize the front-line responsibility of planning, teaching, and evaluating learning as an equal partner with other teachers.

The principals and librarians see the problems that would be created if the library were closed for more than two weeks in similar ways. Participants noted that students would be limited in what they could do at lunchtime; that teaching and learning would be affected; that physical access to the collection as well as Internet access would be diminished; and that the closing of the school's gateway to information would raise a question of credibility about the school's teaching program. Since CPT would most likely stop, classrooms would be much more teacher directed and single textbook oriented.

When asked what would happen if the librarian is absent from school for more than two weeks, most respondents assumed that the question implied that the librarian would not be replaced, but some principals made observations such as: "I always ensure that a trained librarian will continue the same program, approach, and support to staff." If the librarian were absent, the quality of teaching and learning would suffer due to the absence of CPT and there would be declines in resourcing and teaching of information skills and stresses on teachers. The management of the library would suffer especially where the librarian is responsible for the school network, the automated system, and other electronic sources.

When the librarian is absent, the participants reported that arrangements would be made to ensure access to the library. The majority of both principals and librarians indicated that the school would do all it could do to hire a casual teacher who was a qualified librarian. Most schools are prepared for the possible absence of the librarian by training monitors, encouraging class teachers to use the library even when the librarian was away, appointing a clerk to look after library administration, developing school policies and a detailed library handbook, and encouraging mothers to be involved.

The principals and librarians have quite robust ideas about information literacy although the majority tie their conceptions to the information skills model used in Australia. Examples include: the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information; defining, locating, selecting, organizing, presenting, and assessing information in both digital and print resources; the skills of accessing relevant information to help find and generate solutions to problems, of being able to understand information located, of being able to tease out relevant information and use it in a variety of ways to present solutions to problems, of being able to judge the quality and reliability of information. A small number of principals equate information literacy with IT savvy while librarians note that IT is a tool, not an answer. The majority of respondents limited

the discussion of information literacy to students but some noted the need for teachers to understand the process.

There is strong agreement between principals and librarians about what barriers hinder the integration of information skills across the curriculum. The barriers can be grouped under five major headings: funding; teacher knowledge and beliefs; teacher desire to avoid change; planning time; and librarian credentials. Librarians identified a further category: lack of top-down support. Librarians saw the lack of top-down support as a major impediment to their ability to influence the curriculum. While the principals and librarians tended to identify the same type of barriers, the principals tended to be more concerned by the bigger picture and the librarians by more prosaic matters.

Both principals and librarians were asked how they promoted the role of the library through school committees. Both principals and librarians indicated that if the school focus is on information literacy then promotion of the library is just part of that agenda. Providing a constant message through newsletters, spots at staff meetings, e-mail, Web sites, etc., is seen as vital. Principals indicated that they know that their encouragement is vital: encouraging class teachers to plan with the librarian, making certain the library was wired, and pushing the librarian onto committees.

Librarians were asked how they maintained their credibility as librarians. They indicated that they need to promote their value to the school in a range of areas. Being a quality teacher and being reliable are important. Librarians noted the importance of being qualified, of upgrading their competencies, and of engaging in appropriate professional development.

Librarians suggested that their principals could provide support through supplying the latest technology, additional support staff, and more librarian hours; providing bigger budgets for the library; and working with the librarian to focus on information literacy, encourage CPT, and facilitate professional development led by the librarian.

### **Findings from Instrument 3 for Scotland**

In relation to the strengths of the library, principals and school librarians in Scotland were in agreement that the provision of information and resources is the key strength. Principals cited the quality of the school librarian as being the second most important strength, followed by the use of IT in the library and then the library's contribution to learning and teaching in the school. It is interesting to note that the school librarians differed from the principals in that they saw the library's contribution to learning and teaching as being the second most important strength, followed by the use of IT in the library, and then the quality of the school librarian.

The principals and school librarians agreed that the main challenges facing the library were IT development and funding. The principals identified the provision of resources as the third key challenge but put less stress on the role of the school librarian, the contribution to the curriculum, and the location of the library. On the other hand, the school librarians emphasized that the key challenges are: the role of the school librarian and gaining support from senior management and teachers. School librarians also stressed the provision of resources, the contribution to the curriculum, and the development of information skills more than the principals. School librarians were also concerned about support from outside the school, in particular from school library

services, but this factor was not mentioned by principals who were unlikely to be directly involved in the provision of external services. Principals and school librarians clearly identified the school librarian's role in the provision of information and resources and in the development of information skills as the most important contributions to learning and teaching in the school. Principals cited cooperation with teaching staff as the third most important role and the development of the Internet and IT in general as the fourth key role. For school librarians, these issues were cited in reverse order, which may to some extent reflect the principals' underestimation of the contribution which school librarians make in the area of Internet/IT development seen elsewhere in this study. Both principals and school librarians cited the school librarian's role in curriculum development as being important. Professional development was seen by school librarians as important but was not mentioned by principals.

When asked to comment on the effects on learning and teaching when the library is closed for more than two weeks, both principals and school librarians agreed that the strongest effect would be on access to information resources and that this would have direct effect on learning in particular, but there would also be an effect on teaching and the development of information skills across the curriculum. The other main factors identified were lack of access to IT facilities and the skills of a professional school librarian.

Commenting on the effects of the school librarian's absence for more than two weeks, principals and school librarians agreed that the major effect would be on access to information and resources, on pupils' learning, on the development of information skills, and on the availability of the school librarian's expertise.

When asked to comment on the arrangements made in the school librarian's absence, most principals and school librarians commented that there would be supervised access to the library although in some cases, no access would be available. In a few cases, self help was cited but in only one case was a relief school librarian considered a possible interim arrangement.

When asked to define information literacy, principals stressed that this was an essential/important skills for all pupils and comments included: "fundamental to teaching and learning"; "critically important in today's world"; "essential to the inquiring mind" and "the most important development at the start of the twenty-first century." Principals also cited access to information as being an important part of information literacy. The use of print and electronic resources was also rated highly. Other issues cited much less frequently include the selection and evaluation of relevant information, lifelong learning, thinking skills, and retrieval skills. School librarians cited access to and use of print and electronic resources most frequently but also stressed the essential nature of information literacy, although not as forcefully as their principals.

When asked to identify the barriers to integrating information skills across the curriculum, principals identified lack of finance as the key issue, followed by lack of time. School librarians identified lack of time as the key issue, followed by finance. Both agreed that teachers' attitudes to the development of information skills are a problem in some schools. Principals emphasized the need to develop IT, the lack of resources and the need for more staff development as key issues whereas school librarians identified the lack of a whole school policy on information skills and the need for better management as key issues.

Principals and school librarians were asked how they promoted the school library through committees in the school and there was general agreement that having the school librarian as a member of committees (such as the IT committee, the resources committee, and the information skills committee) was the best way to promote the library. Principals stressed promoting the library through a range of committees; a number of school librarians emphasized the importance of attending head of department meetings although it was clear that not all school librarians were entitled to attend such meetings. School librarians also stressed the importance of written and verbal communication with committee members.

Both principals and school librarians were asked for final comments on their “role in developing and supporting an information literate school community.” While a significant percentage chose not to comment, principals identified leadership and commitment to the development of information skills as the key issues, closely followed by the adequate provision of funding and resources. Other issues identified were the crucial role of the principal in this area, the need to promote the role of the school librarian, and the development of the library as a whole school resource. School librarians were more willing to comment on this and identified the development of information skills across the curriculum as their main role, followed by the need for them to encourage support for information literacy among teachers and emphasize the need for schools to develop a whole school policy on information skills. Other issues cited were the improvement of library stock, the promotion of the school librarian as the school’s information professional, and the need to seek better funding for the library. It should be noted here that a number of school librarians used this question to restate problems faced by them in the school and did not answer the question directly.

School librarians in the Scotland study were asked two additional questions. The first related to how the school librarian maintained credibility as a school librarian. The key elements in achieving credibility were identified as taking a professional approach and promoting the library and their own role within the school. Professional development was also seen as very important and the provision of a professional service and involvement in school wide policy development were emphasized.

School librarians were then asked what support the principal could provide. The key needs identified were additional finance, more clerical support, and the inclusion of the library in the school’s curriculum plan. Other key issues were more support for professional development and more promotion of the library by the principal.

### **Findings from Instrument 3 for South Korea**

A traditional library in South Korea is like a warehouse of old books; there is no information technology in most schools. The school librarian’s main task is to order books, and the main focus of the library is in supporting reading and students’ independent learning.

Both principals and school librarians saw the strengths of the library as promoting reading and providing books or information for teaching and learning. However, the principals put the strongest emphasis on reading while the school librarians put the emphasis on providing information or helping teachers teach and students learn.

Both principals and school librarians stated the challenges that face the library are budget and information literacy.

The school librarian's critical functions are providing information and reading guidance. The function of providing information was seen as circulation of books.

If the library were closed or a school librarian were absent for more than two weeks, the majority of the principals and school librarians said that the main effect would be in the use of information materials. Thus the participants emphasized that the student aides have to be trained well in order to ensure access to the library when the school librarian was absent.

Both school librarians and principals saw information literacy mostly as the ability to get information through computer network. Mentioned by school librarians, but with less frequency, was the provision of teaching-learning materials.

The major barriers to the integration of information skills across the curriculum were software and budget, according to the seven principals who answered this question are. The nineteen school librarians who answered this question emphasized old-style teaching methods (i.e., to textbooks), the principal and teacher's lack of understanding, the system of university entrance exams, and the school librarian's ability.

Principals stated that their role with school committees is to provide a supporting budget and insist upon the library's importance. But the majority of school librarians thought they could promote the role of the library through school committees and cooperative planning and teaching or through collection development.

The school librarians held quite diverse opinions about how a principal could provide additional support to a school librarian. They insist the principal can show support by providing an adequate budget and encouraging a school librarian to participate in cooperative program planning and teaching. Others supports mentioned included paying attention to the library, believing in the school librarian's role or ability, and giving the school librarian a chance to attend professional seminars or training courses.

In summary, the South Korean principals saw the library as a whole: for them it must be a performance tool serving everybody, managed by an efficient and friendly school librarian who opens the library as long as possible. Despite the principal's interest in the library, his support and cooperation with the school librarian is minimal. The South Korean school librarians appeared to have a clear understanding of what principal support entails and of the need to gain this critical support. However, they appeared to have less knowledge of the strategies that they might employ to gain principal support and little assertiveness in using the strategies of which they were aware.

### **Findings from Instrument 3 for Finland**

Overall, both principals and school librarians in the Finland study agreed that the existence of a library was important. Principals emphasized that the strengths of a library are its resources and equipment. A good library is near to users. It has open access and connections to other libraries, qualified and/or cooperative staff, and a focus on learning or curriculum. School librarians

emphasized the library's open access, nearness to the users, resources and equipment, qualified and cooperative staff, and focus on learning or curriculum.

Principals saw IT and acquisition of both printed and electronic material as the biggest challenges in the library. More room, professional staff, and cooperation between teachers, students, and the library were also important. School librarians considered adequate library space and the acquisition of modern basic materials most important. After these followed IT and IT-user education, teaching information skills, and weeding out old material. The low salary compared to teachers' wages and low status of qualified school librarians were also mentioned: "To get the appointment, status and salary of a real school librarian. The other challenges, e.g., integration into curriculum etc., follow long behind." Overall, principals emphasized the importance of IT more than school librarians. School librarians sometimes saw IT as an enemy to reading.

Principals considered the school librarian's task to teach information skills/user education and to inspire and encourage students and staff most important. Traditional library tasks such as cataloging or converting the card catalog to a database, selecting and acquiring materials, and organizing the library were next. School librarians saw their most important tasks the acquisition of material, the guidance of students to the right sources of information, and the development of a quality library collection. School librarians saw their most important task as the acquisition of the materials, while according to principals' opinions it was the teaching of information skills.

If the library were closed for more than two weeks, the majority of the principals considered that the students' independent work would become more difficult, but a few thought that it would not affect schoolwork at all. There were also opinions that students would have to go elsewhere and the teaching strategies could not vary during the closure. The school librarians emphasized that students could not work independently at school or they could not complete their assignments or essays. Some teachers would have access to the library but in some cases students would not. Overall principals saw the effects of closure less important than did school librarians.

The principals responded in different ways to the question about what would happen if the school librarian were absent from school more than two weeks. Some principals reported that the library was always open in their school. Others thought that the absence of the school librarian would cause some harm but would not upset the whole school. In some cases, there was a stand-in school librarian. One principal considered the absence of the school librarian to be a catastrophe! The school librarians on the other hand mentioned the practical side of the school librarian's absence: the library would be messy and the material would be returned to the wrong places. The majority thought that absence had no or hardly any effect. There were also those school librarians who remembered the learners: guidance will become to an end and the same happens to the cooperation and integration, or: "Chaos! Material will be lost. Students will have no help in using the machines, or in seeking information. Lessons cannot be taught cooperatively by the teacher and school librarian."

When the school librarian is absent, the arrangements to ensure access to the library varied: the library was always open, other teachers had keys, or the janitor opened the door. Some respondents pointed out that students knew the rules of the library and self-service was arranged. It seemed clear that inside school there were arrangements to ensure that the library could be used during school terms even if the school librarian was absent.

Most principals saw information literacy as a critical skill to be able to look for information; a few saw this in terms of being able to find essential information or to be able to use information for the right purpose. It was also mentioned that information literacy is the skill to distinguish between truth and fiction or the skill to “understand the whole picture.” The majority of the school librarians saw information literacy as an ability to find information from various sources. Others saw it as knowing how to acquire, understand, analyze, criticize, and apply information, to distinguish the important from the unimportant, and to see the cause and result. One school librarian also stated: “You must know how to use the library catalogue and search for appropriate information.” Both principals and school librarians had quite similar ideas about information literacy.

A small majority of the principals saw the limited subject areas or the rigid areas of compulsory courses and their fixed contents as the major barriers to the integration of information skills across the curriculum. Lack of resources, time, space, and training were also barriers. The school librarians painted a slightly different picture. A few mentioned the lack of time and the rigid borders between subject areas and tight timetables. Qualified school librarians also told of negative attitudes of the teachers, low status of the school librarian, and ignorance about the work of the school librarian. Principals and school librarians in Finland differed significantly from each other on this question.

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