

# **School libraries in the UK: a worthwhile past, a difficult present – and a transformed future?**

## **KEY FINDINGS**

This report covers three related surveys and the key findings are summarised at the end of each section. For a picture of the state of secondary, independent, middle and special school libraries see page 7. For a review of what school librarians do and how they do it see page 17. For a snapshot of a number of primary school libraries see page 20.

The common denominator is that there are many people working in schools who regard libraries as important. The comments accompanying the surveys show that many senior managers, teachers and librarians all see a direct connection between wide reading and personal development and see a key role for an effective school library in equipping students to operate effectively in the Cyber Age.

## **Introduction**

These UK national surveys of school libraries were conducted between December 2009 and April 2010 with funds provided by the Wendy Drewett Bequest which is administered by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). The work was complex, involving:

- A baseline e-survey of primary school libraries focused on describing the library and its resources
- A baseline e-survey of secondary, middle, special and independent school libraries with a similar focus
- A follow-up e-survey of the activities of school library staff in secondary, middle, special and independent school library staff
- A targeted follow-up survey of secondary, middle, special and independent school library staff in 15 selected local authority areas, conducted by interview or by e-survey.

The surveys were managed by Information Management Associates and commissioned by the School Libraries Group of CILIP. The team of volunteer interviewers was drawn from members of the School Libraries Group of CILIP. By April 2010:

- 1,542 schools had responded to the secondary etc. baseline survey
- 1,044 librarians had completed the activity survey
- 651 primary schools had replied to their baseline survey.

## **What is the school library<sup>1</sup>?**

The school library can be about many things – it can promote and support leisure-time reading, contribute to the social development of the students in the school and provide a place to study and do homework. Importantly, the library can be a learning resource centre to support all the predominant modes of teaching and learning in the school, ranging from teacher-led lessons to independent student learning and e-learning.

To do all this well, the library needs adequate space and a range of current and appropriate books and other learning resources, backed by ready student access to ICT. The baseline surveys of secondary/independent/middle/special and other schools in part A below and of primary schools in part C reflect the extent to which these needs are being met.

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<sup>1</sup> Various other terms are used in particular schools to describe the library, notably ‘learning resource centre’ or ‘learning centre’.

The character and contribution of the school library is fundamentally established by the school librarian, working in the context set by the Senior Leadership Team and hopefully mirroring the ethos and best practices of the school. What (s)he does to promote literacy and reading for pleasure, to develop information literacy, to engage with e-learning, to collaborate with teachers, and to help students to develop as learners and as people can make a major contribution to the school, but this is not always achievable or achieved. Part B of this report focuses on what the library staff contribute to the school.

## **Why school libraries are vital to our economic future – and why we should be concerned**

Some people with a shaky view of information and knowledge acquisition argue that school libraries are no longer necessary because of the ready access to a plethora of information via the Internet. The uncontrolled growth of the Internet and the variable levels of access to e-publications and e-resources are placing greater than ever demands on the information handling capacities of students of all ages, including their ability to read and digest material published in a wide variety of forms. School libraries have an essential role to play in helping students at every stage in their quest for learning and in equipping them to function effectively in an increasingly competitive electronic environment.

We know from recent US research not only how highly students rate the importance of their school libraries but what difference school libraries can make to exam results! A series of large-scale rigorous studies across 18 US States and a Canadian Province have demonstrated that well-organised and properly resourced school libraries make a measurable difference to the academic performance of students. (See: *School Libraries Work*<sup>2</sup> for a summary of this research.)

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<sup>2</sup> Scholastic Research Foundation Paper. *School Libraries Work!* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Danbury, Conn: Scholastic Library Publishing 2008.

## Part A: Baseline survey of Middle/Secondary/Special/Independent Schools

### Limitations of the survey

This survey was administered electronically and was publicized in several ways: replies were invited through the websites of the Chartered Institute for Library and Information Professionals (and CILIP in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and through CILIP Update (their professional journal), as well as through the School Library Association website. The Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians arranged for Schools Library Services to draw the survey to the attention of their subscribing school libraries. Publicity was also sought through the national education press. As a result of how it was publicized, this survey is skewed towards responses from professionally qualified librarians and, possibly towards the better library services, whose staff are more likely to have responded.

### The nature of the survey

1,542 baseline replies were received about the state of secondary, independent, middle and special school libraries between December 2009 and April 2010, as well as 23 reports from schools which no longer had a library or were facing library closure. (A few responses were received after the data analysis commenced. These will be included in the full on-line report of this research.)

On completing the baseline survey, respondents were invited to click through to a further activity survey and to provide more detailed information about what school librarians do. (In 15 local authority target areas, chosen to provide a geographical spread and a range of local authority types, respondents were given the additional option of an interview.) Although both versions of this activity survey were demanding and time-consuming, we were pleased that 1,044 respondents opted to help further. Much of the detail in the report below is drawn from these activity questionnaires and interviews.

### Baseline survey: the schools

The responses to the baseline survey were received from the following types of schools:

Type of school	No.	%
Secondary	1,093	70.9
Independent	237	15.4
Middle deemed secondary	47	3.0
Special	18	1.2
Other	90	5.8
Not specified	57	3.7
TOTAL	1,542	100

**Table A1: Types of schools responding to the baseline survey**

### Running the library

Since it can be anticipated that a key influence on the state of development of the school library is the level of expertise of the person running the service, we asked who was responsible for running the library. The answers are shown below:

	No.	%
Professionally-qualified school librarian	905	58.7
Other designated school librarian	536	34.8
School Administrator	8	0.5
Nobody/volunteer staff/other	48	3.1
Not specified	45	2.9
TOTAL	1,542	100

**Table A2: Person responsible for day-to-day management and running of the school library**

As predicted, these responses over-represent the proportion of professionally qualified librarians nationally. With this level of professional librarian support it could be anticipated that the libraries described would have extensive opening hours during term-time. The picture that emerged of the hours per week that the libraries were both open and accessible is summarised below:

Hours open	No. of schools	%
Up to 10	27	1.7
11 to 20	29	1.9
21 to 35	398	25.8
36 to 40	644	41.8
More than 40	422	27.4
Not specified	22	1.4
TOTAL	1,542	100

**Table A3: Average hours per week that the library is open and accessible to students in term-time**

It is disappointing to see that more than a quarter (29.4%) of the libraries do not operate a full school day. However, it is also noteworthy that 27.4% of the school libraries covered here operate an extended school day.

But how much library time is being paid for? 86 of the schools (5.6%) are only paying for 20 or fewer hours per week of staff time, whereas 239 (15.5%) pay for 51 to 70 hours and 194 (12.6%) pay for more than 70 hours.

### Size and state of the library

The size of the bookstock can be a misleading indicator unless the stock has been carefully pruned but it does give a crude indicator of library size, especially when this is related to the number of students in the school.

Number of items	No. of schools	%
More than 20,000	91	5.9
15,001 - 20,000	177	11.5
10,001 - 15,000	461	29.9
5,001 - 10,000	525	34.0
Up to 5,000 items	172	11.2

**Table A4.1: Estimated size of school library bookstocks**

It might be hoped that the size of bookstock would mirror the size of the school roll, but does it?

	Up to 5,000 items	5,001 - 10,000	10,001 - 15,000	15,001 - 20,000	More than 20,000	Total
More than 1,251	0.6	4.2	7.5	4.3	2.7	19.3
501 - 1,250	6.1	24.5	20.3	6.4	3.0	60.3
Up to 500 students	4.4	5.3	2.1	0.8	0.2	6.1
<b>Total</b>	11.1	34.0	29.9	11.5	5.9	85.7

(221 of the 1,542 schools responding did not provide data on school roll or stock size.)

**Table A4.2: Size of bookstock related to the number of students on roll - % of all schools**

This table shows that there is not a proportionate increase in school library stock size to reflect growth in student numbers. The average (median) stock size is between 10,001 and 15,000 for all schools with more than 501 students on roll; the median stock size for smaller schools is 5,001- 10,000. Although it could be anticipated that larger schools would have fewer books per student, some consistency in expenditure increase would be expected. (It may be that expenditure on e-resources is complicating the picture here.)

How current is the library stock of books and other materials and what is its physical state? Perhaps unsurprisingly, since they are usually responsible for maintaining the stock. 872 respondents (56.5%) described their stock as good, 387 (25.1%) as adequate and 206 (13.3%) as patchy or poor.

How well is the stock differentiated to meet the full range of student needs in the school (including language needs)? The replies this time were substantially less positive: 586 people (38%) thought their stock was well differentiated, 662 (42.9%) thought it was done adequately and 253 (16.4%) thought that differentiation was done patchily or poorly. (The adequacy of stock and the extent of differentiation is explored more fully in the activities survey in part B below.)

How adequate is the space provided to house the library? It is shown below that almost a third of respondents (32.6%) thought that their library had insufficient space.

Available space	No. of schools	%
Good	525	34.0
Adequate	400	25.9
Insufficient, but within workable limits	365	23.7
Inadequate to meet current demand	137	8.9
Not specified	115	7.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,542</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table A5: Perceived adequacy of library space**

## Deployment of information technology

Turning to the use of computers in the library, all but 33 respondents (2.1%) reported that they had some form of electronic library management system in operation. The reported availability of computer terminals or laptops for student use in the library varied substantially:

No. of terminals/laptops	No. of schools	%
1 to 3	116	7.5
4 to 9	317	20.6
10 to 19	522	33.9
20 to 29	279	18.1
30 or more	266	17.3
None or not specified	42	2.7
TOTAL	1,542	*100.1

\* Rounding error

**Table A6: Computer terminals/laptops available in the library for student use**

51.9% of responding libraries have enough computers to constitute a significant supervision issue and 17.3% have enough to accommodate an average class but 28.1% have fewer than 10 machines available for students in the library.

### Access to Schools Library Services

813 respondents (52.7%) said that their school subscribed to the Schools Library Service; 502 (32.6%) did not; and 199 (12.9%) did not have a Schools Library Service available. The survey is skewed towards schools which have an SLS available (partly because the SLSs took a leading role in publicizing the survey locally).

### The school library budget

Apart from staff salaries, the most significant operating cost of most libraries is the expenditure on stock and resources. What is the current annual library budget for stock and services in each school and was this growing, shrinking or holding at the time of the survey (prior to the General Election and subsequent period of austerity)? This again varies substantially between libraries:

Budget in £	Decreased	No change	Increased	Not specified	Total
Up to £1,000	48	33	6	2	89
£1,001 - £3,000	130	201	33	0	364
£3,001 - £5,000	110	181	57	1	349
£5,001 - £10,000	112	194	75	0	381
£10,001 - £20,000	57	89	48	2	196
More than £20,000	13	24	16	0	53
No specific allocation	6	15	4	2	27
Cannot divulge info/not reported	15	23	15	30	83
Totals	491	760	254	37	1,542

**Table A7: Size of school library budget for stock and services and changes since the previous year**

To summarize, 16.5% of respondents reported an increase in budget for the purchase of stock and services over the previous year, 49.3% reported no change (effectively a decrease, given the current state of the economy) and a worrying 31.8% had experienced a decrease. Of particular concern here are the 178 libraries (11.5%) with a budget of £3,000 or less which have received budget cuts.

## **Baseline survey: Conclusions**

To summarize this overview of secondary, independent (etc.) libraries:

- More than a quarter of those surveyed operate an extended school day but more than a quarter do not cover a full school day
- School bookstocks do not generally grow as student numbers increase
- More than half of bookstocks are seen as good but 13% are patchy or poor
- Almost a third of the libraries have insufficient space
- Over half of the libraries house up to twenty computers or laptops; 17% have enough for an average class
- Almost half the library budgets for stock and resources are stuck at last year's level; almost a third have been cut, some from a very low base.

## **Part B: Activity survey of Middle/Secondary/Special/Independent Schools**

### **The survey respondents**

As noted earlier, the baseline survey respondents were invited to click through to a further activity survey and to provide more detailed information through a detailed questionnaire or, in selected local authority areas, by telephone interview if they preferred. 1,044 people did so, of whom 463 (44.3%) are qualified librarians, 59 (5.7%) hold dual qualifications in education and librarianship, 27 (2.6%) are teachers who have been assigned additional responsibility for day-to-day management/operation of the library, 96 (9.2%) have an HE qualification in another subject discipline (i.e. not librarianship or education; these people are identified as 'Graduates' below) and 326 (31.2%) are neither qualified librarians nor graduates.

Qualified librarians, for the purposes of this report, are people with a current or former qualification from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals or its predecessor the Library Association, and/or a university degree in Library and Information Studies (or equivalent). The argument for including lapsed members of CILIP (or of the LA) is that the professional training, continuing professional development and awareness raising of these bodies should have sensitized current and former members to the main issues and professional approaches in school libraries.

Again, for the purposes of this report, everyone without an HE degree or a library professional qualification has been identified as 'unqualified'. This categorization should be treated with caution: some lapsed CILIP members who had received professional training as librarians may have categorized themselves as unqualified because they are no longer members; some of the respondents reported holding or working towards National Vocational Qualifications (or equivalent qualifications below degree level) in Library and Information Work or in other disciplines, but it was decided not to treat these as qualified librarians because these programmes focus primarily at operational level. The underlying hypothesis when separating the 'unqualified' group from respondents with HE or librarianship professional qualifications is that these other categories of respondent are more likely to be strategic in developing school library work. However, a further complication is that some of the 'unqualified' respondents are very experienced as school librarians and may have developed strategically through that experience, especially if supported by a strong schools library service..

Replies were received from 762 secondary schools (73%), 177 independent schools (17%), 31 middle schools (3%) 17 academy schools (1.6%) and 57 others (5.4%) including a few that did not identify their type.

### **Management of the school library**

#### **Management supervision for the librarian**

Who the librarian reports to can be viewed as an indicator of how the school views its library. 405 of the respondents (38.8%) report to the Head or Deputy Head and 221 to an Assistant Head. 64.8% of all the qualified librarians report at these levels, compared with 55.2% of other categories of library manager. 143 respondents (13.7%) report to another member of the Senior Leadership Team, usually one with an area of curriculum responsibility, but 105 (10%) report to the Bursar, Finance Director or Business Manager, which is likely to weaken the librarian's scope for engaging with curriculum matters. Interestingly, several people report to a Deputy or Assistant Head on curriculum-related matters and to the Bursar for administration. The relatively low status of the library in the school is signalled in the 119 cases (11.4%) where the librarian reports to someone (frequently an English teacher, but in one instance the Head's PA) who is not a member of the SLT, this is doubly so in the 8 cases where the librarian formerly reported to a curriculum member of senior management. Such a change in support also occurs at other levels: *"It used to be the Head, but now all the support staff have switched to the Business Manager. This results in lower status and loss of any library knowledge*

by the line manager”, or, “Originally reported to the Head of English when I first started working 18 months ago but now it is delegated to her second in command. Very difficult to get time with either, very frustrating.” Finally, 25 people claimed to have no specific reporting arrangement in place.

Whatever the level of reporting, this is of little use without adequate access to the designated person. At best, this backing can make a real difference, such as: “A member of SLT who is also in charge of Teaching and Learning and the technology specialism. His office is very close and he comes into the library almost every break and lunchtime. It’s fantastic.” The range of replies to our question about access is shown below.

	Librarian	Dual qualified	Teacher	Graduate	Unqualif	Not specif	Total
Adequate - regular review meetings	150	19	5	22	74	18	288
Adequate - occasional review meetings	111	15	6	31	83	23	269
Adequate informal access	105	20	8	18	77	18	246
Sporadic access	59	3	2	14	44	11	133
Little access	28	2	5	10	33	3	81
Only by e-mail/written reports	2	0	1	0	2	0	5
No access	0	0	0	0	2	0	2

**Table B1: Accessibility of school librarian line managers**

Access is fairly consistent across these groups except that more than twice the proportion of all qualified librarians (32.4%) than ‘unqualified’ staff (14.2%) have regular review meetings with their line managers. 21% of library ‘managers’ have, at best, sporadic access to their line manager.

In addition to these indirect indicators of the relative status of school librarians and their libraries, we asked the 142 interview respondents how they saw their status within the school: 45 people described this as high, 10 as medium (or marginal) and 10 as low. However, most respondents replied more in terms of their organisational status as seen by teachers or senior management. This status was often ambiguous so that people might fit into more than one of the main categories mentioned, which are academic staff (51) Heads of Department, (52 - real or nominal) or ancillary/support/administrative (63, including 33 ‘unqualified’ staff). The role ambiguity experienced by people was encapsulated by one qualified librarian who described herself as “*Caught between two stools – something like the governess in Victorian times – neither quite one of the family nor one of the servants.*”

The other dimension that we explored was the quality of feedback about performance received by school librarians. 408 informants (39.1%) have access to the SLT on request (56.7% of these are qualified librarians) and 16 are members of the SLT. The same number (408) have received positive general feedback from senior managers and 318 (30.5%) have had public recognition for specific achievements. Some of the librarians waxed lyrical about the enthusiastic support received from the Head and senior management but others qualified their statements, usually by distinguishing between good support around discipline and less enthusiasm for library development. By contrast, 356 respondents (34.1%) reported various levels of inconsistent support or indifference from senior management, ranging from being largely ignored (29.2%) to receiving negative feedback.

## Strategic management of the library

How strategic are the managers of school libraries? Some indication of aspiration beyond the operational level is given by whether policy and development documents are in place. 317 (60.7%) of

the qualified librarians (including those with dual qualifications) had an active library policy in place that had been approved by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or governors and was used to guide the library strategy. This compared with 257 from all the other categories (49.2%); curiously the graduates had the lowest proportion here at 42.7%.

307 (58.8%) of the qualified librarians had a formally approved library development plan in place, usually linked to the school improvement plan and being used to drive the development of the library. This compared with 239 of the other categories (45.8%), with the lowest proportion as 'unqualified' staff (40.8%). One qualified librarian said *"I'm working on a library policy at the moment – I feel it needs to be 'owned' so it will go out for comment by Heads of Departments and the senior learning team."*

At the other extreme, 43 people (4.1%) claimed that they had no policy in place 'because the school does not use this approach to management'. 79 people (7.6%) said that the library was not seen as important enough to merit preparing a policy, whilst 118 people (11.3%) thought it was not seen as important enough to prepare a development plan.

A further indicator of whether a strategic approach to the work is being adopted is the extent to which library staff proactively evaluate what they do. For the most part, they still rely upon collecting and reporting 'busy-ness statistics', with 397 qualified librarians (76%) adopting this approach compared with 331 (63.4%) of the other categories of library manager. Almost a third of all the qualified librarians (32.6%) conduct user satisfaction surveys of students and/or staff and 36% systematically record and report success stories, compared with 22% and 23% of the other categories. At a more challenging level, 19% of all the qualified librarians conduct and report on self-evaluation compared with 13.8% of the others (usually employing the framework published by the former Department for Education and Skills or the whole school self-evaluation framework).

One dually-qualified librarian summarised her evaluation activity as: "Lessons: Reading - part of the overall student assessment. Information literacy - student feedback; diary with teachers. Formal evaluation - action research with students and teacher (e.g. completed an action research cycle with an RE cohort throughout A level). Jointly taught lessons in the library - discuss, recent outcomes, self and peer assessment. Interviews - sample of students. The results of these efforts were shared with students and the teacher, as well as the Head and the Head of Sixth."

## **Engaging with the main school activities**

School librarians can contribute to the school in many ways, but important amongst these is direct involvement in teaching and learning through promotion of reading for pleasure, information literacy development and other means. They can also help by directly supporting teachers, contributing to the literacy drive and providing resource access (and increasingly, e-access) for students. These areas are considered in turn below. They also have a unique position within the school from which to help in the pastoral care of students, as various respondents made clear when describing their key roles. (This aspect of the work is covered in the e-report of this project.)

## **Promoting reading for pleasure**

School librarians encourage students to enjoy reading in a variety of ways: most are involved in supporting the school literacy work, in many cases directly by working with teachers in the classroom or library and in most schools by obtaining and organizing resources to support literacy efforts. Again, most librarians take an active part in encouraging reading for pleasure, some through reading with groups or individuals, but also by promoting this work by various means, notably:

	Librarian	Dual qualified	Teacher	Graduates	Unqualified	Not specified	Total
Exhibitions and displays	377	48	19	70	246	26	786
Reading clubs	303	31	13	58	166	18	589
Author visits	300	41	11	53	171	12	588
Awards for reading	203	31	12	41	137	9	437
Competitive reading schemes	125	18	8	33	84	6	274

**Table B2: Ways of promoting reading for pleasure, by category of school librarian**

Both categories of qualified librarian report higher proportions of activity than do the other groups for organising exhibitions and displays (81.4% compared to 69.2%),<sup>3</sup> running reading clubs (64% to 48.9%) and arranging author visits (65% to 47%); the other activities are fairly consistent across types of school librarian. Local and regional book awards were mentioned most frequently, followed by Carnegie and Greenaway Award shadowing.

Asked whether she promotes reading for pleasure, one librarian said “Absolutely. It’s the main thing I do. I organize a *Reading Week* every year in October: author visits; a *Readathon*; games; *Carnegie Shadowing* (I attended a Carnegie party at the British Library); and the *Red House Award*. I was involved with the *Radio 4 Book Club* programme and the *Harry Potter* launch at the Natural History Museum. I run a Staff Reading Group and a Sixth Form Reading Group. Reviews are sent to *Booktime*. I produce a Year 10 booklet of reviews to encourage others and organize a *Whole School Read* project - everyone reads the same book. In the first year we did *Boy in Striped Pyjamas*; the work is cross curricular - related to many departments. Everyone was involved in the recent author visit - staff pupils, governors, parents, nuns: it was used to raise money for charity. We participated in *BBC News School Report*. Anything I can get involved in.”

In addition to devising or mounting quizzes and competitions, respondents found many other ways of promoting reading, such as (in descending order of frequency) celebrating World Book Day, National Poetry Day and other such events, encouraging peer book review and paired reading, introducing Accelerated Reader programmes, organising book weeks/festivals, promotion via school portals, VLEs and Intranets, and running book fairs. One school has a Writer in Residence. At the other extreme, a graduate librarian complained that “I was not allowed to put on a *World Book Day* competition – I was told to get on with cataloguing instead”.

It was clear from many comments that all this promotional work is taken on in addition to the ‘bread and butter’ supporting teachers in developing literacy and wider reading, as well as giving one-to-one help and guidance to students.

### **Information literacy work with students**

The extent of library staff engagement in information literacy development activities within the school is potentially significant as an indicator of proactive support for students as learners. This is likely to be particularly true if the library staff adopt a reasonably sophisticated approach to their information literacy work.

<sup>3</sup> There is some under-reporting of this activity amongst the 142 interview respondents – they are only counted here if they mentioned exhibitions and displays when recounting what they do.

### Contributing to IL work in the school

Unsurprisingly, a substantially higher proportion of graduates (90.6%) and qualified librarians (86.8%) engage with this work in the school than do the ‘unqualified’ and unidentified (65.9%). This difference becomes more marked when the information literacy contributions are examined more closely below. An anomalous response from teachers (70.3%) may reflect the broadly administrative role adopted by those who have library management as just one of their roles. Several of the library staff reported that they were no longer allowed to get involved or had no opportunity to do so. There may be some ‘traditional’ teaching-focused (rather than learning-focused) schools where IL work by library staff is not appropriate<sup>4</sup> and there are some library staff who are not willing or able to get involved.

### Targeting IL work

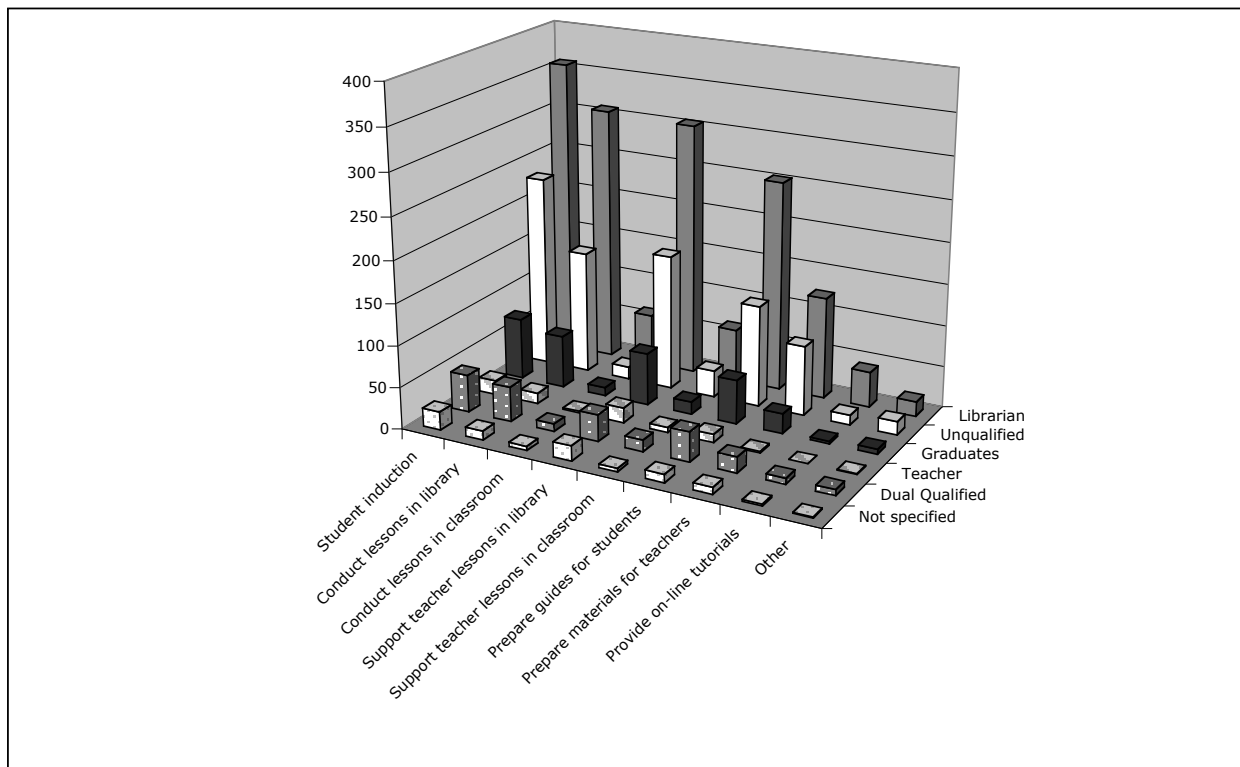
The relatively easy option in IL work is to concentrate efforts on the first year or two years when problems and issues around information are most evident, or on sixth formers who may be more receptive to ideas about effective researching and presentation of information. However, there is a growing view that effective IL work should be addressed progressively through the years at school, which offers a much bigger challenge and demands collaboration from teachers and senior management support. Where do the respondents focus?

	Librarian	Dual qualified	Teacher	Graduate	Unqualified	Not specified	Total
Work with one/ two years	221	22	6	45	114	11	419
Work with most years	80	8	6	15	47	3	159
Work with all years	38	9	2	13	43	3	108
Focus on progression through the years	36	7	3	5	18	4	73
Not specified	88	13	10	18	104	52	285
Total	463	59	27	96	326	73	1044

**Table B3: Focus of IL work on students through the years**

80.7% of the qualified librarians and 81.3% of the graduates worked with students in one through to all years on information literacy compared with 60% of the other categories reported that they concentrated on information skills progression through the years (the dual qualified staff ratio to ‘unqualified’ staff was 11.9% to 5.5%). Clearly, to focus on IL progression through the years constitutes a major challenge for most schools and is well beyond the capacities of the school librarian alone. These replies raise questions about the types of information literacy work undertaken by the various groups of staff which are considered below.

<sup>4</sup> Earlier UK research on the effective school library offered a matrix which differentiated between various types of school library engagement with the school based on the predominant teaching approach in the school. See: Streatfield, D.R. and Markless, S. *Invisible learning? The contribution of school libraries to teaching and learning. Report ... on a research project* Library and Information Research Report 98 London: The British Library 1994.



**Figure B1: Types of IL activity undertaken by library staff**

These activities are fairly consistent across the categories, except that qualified librarians (13.4%) and to a lesser extent the graduates (10.4%) conduct proportionately more IL lessons in the classroom than the other groups (7%).

	Librarian	Dual qualified	Teacher	Graduate	Unqualified	Not specified	Total
Find Information	331	39	15	65	180	14	644
Select Information	272	31	11	55	142	15	526
Evaluate Information	208	27	7	30	94	9	375
Make sense	166	21	5	27	89	9	317
Answer Questions	167	24	6	24	99	8	328
Solve problems	137	18	4	22	84	6	271

**Table B4: Main focus of IL contribution of library staff**

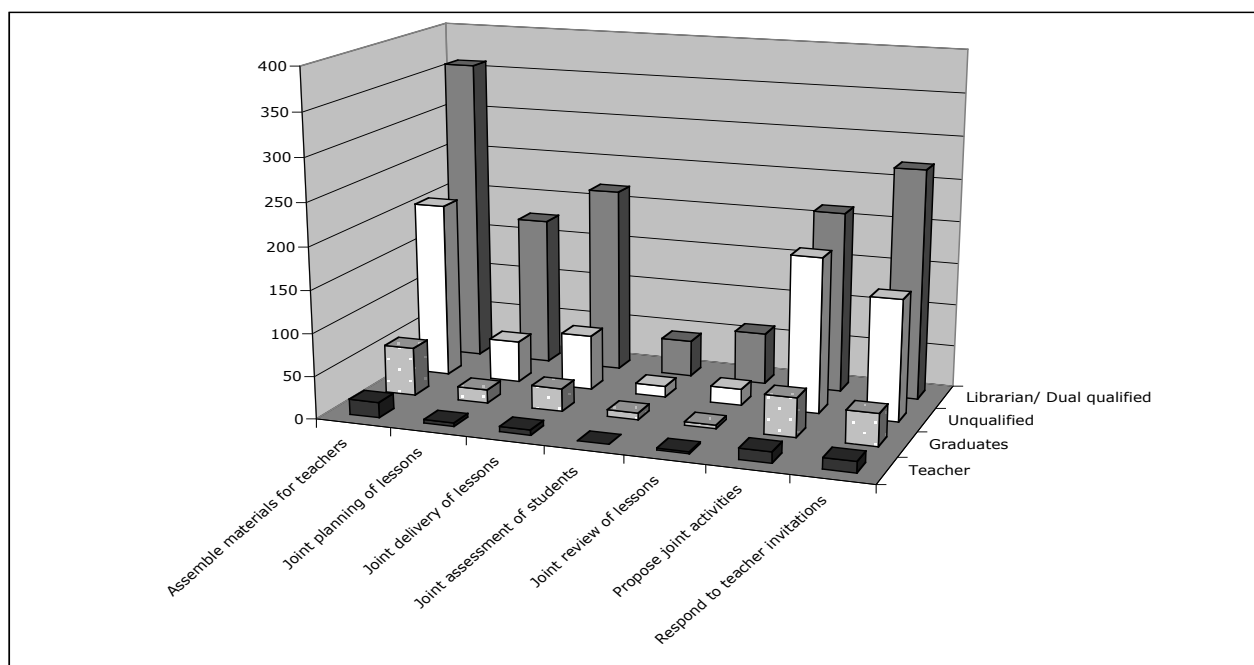
Commentators on education librarianship have noted the tendency of librarians to focus their IL efforts information seeking and selecting, rather than the more challenging aspects of evaluating and making sense of information. This table strongly confirms that tendency, which may prove to be misapplied if the promised ICT advances in locating information are achieved in the next few years, possibly making such work redundant.

If we compare all the qualified librarians with the other respondents in relation to each phase in the information literacy cycle, the difference in focus becomes clearer. 82% of qualified librarians focused on finding information compared with 75% of the others; and 67% on selecting information, compared with 60%. The difference becomes more marked in relation to evaluating information (52% compared to 38%) and making sense of information (54% compared to 35%). The gap then narrows again when the focus turns to using information to answer questions (42% compared to 37%) and using information to solve problems (34% compared to 32%).

There is a finite limit to how much collaborative IL work school librarians can undertake. However, some people are thinking more strategically. A dually-qualified librarian explains, “I talk to teachers about teaching and learning, then when I know their interests, I pass things their way and link them up with other teachers. I participate in academic meetings so I know the priorities and what people have to do. Most of my success comes from being proactive in supporting individual teachers and continuing to engage with them. Teachers are often isolated (not all departments are cohesive) and when in the classroom they are on their own. Collaboration depends on relationship building - trust, feeling safe, ways to bond, such as talking though commonalities of problems.

## Collaboration with teachers

Library staff are most likely to be effective in developing reading and information literacy work in the school if they collaborate with teachers, because otherwise the ratio of library staff numbers to students is very much against them. Collaboration will also help to bridge the gap in librarian understanding of current teaching issues (unless of course they are also teachers). The extent and forms of collaboration undertaken are summarised below:



**Figure B2: Types of collaboration of library staff with teachers**

It can be seen that qualified librarians engage more in joint planning and delivery of lessons; other library staff tend to focus more on assembling appropriate resources for teachers to use in their subject teaching and their involvement in joint planning also tends to be resource-focused.

## Other forms of active support for teaching and learning in the school

In what other ways do library staff engage with teaching and learning support? Again, the main focus here is on assembling appropriate resources for teachers to use in their subject teaching, but some library staff are more proactive in anticipating needs by obtaining schemes of work from teachers or their departments - 209 of the qualified librarians (40%) and 141 (27%) of the ‘others’ attempt to monitor needs in this way. Smaller numbers of library staff go further in providing systematic proactive support by engaging in curriculum planning activities alongside teachers, conducting curriculum mapping, running CPD sessions for teachers on available resources or other means.

## Growing up in a virtual environment

In what ways do library staff guide students towards the most appropriate electronic resources? Only around a quarter of library staff are active in this area, partly because in some libraries electronic access has not kept pace with its expansion elsewhere, and also because keeping up with e-resources is a substantial and time-consuming job in itself. 272 of the people replying (26.1%) create links to other relevant resources beyond the library, 262 (25.8%) bookmark appropriate sites and resources (often using library management system software), 245 (23.5%) review websites for their suitability in teaching and learning and 210 (20.1%) identify information portals. Twice the proportion of qualified librarians to other library staff engaged in bookmarking sites (38.9% to 19.5%) and creating links to resources (34.9% to 17.2%).

491 respondents (47%) are actively contributing to the school website, Intranet or VLE and 213 (20.4%) are helping to manage (or are managing) the website, intranet or VLE.

Examples of what is undertaken here and in securing e-resources (all from qualified librarians) include:

*“Development of online lessons, Glow, blogs, school website, a great deal of ICT support for teaching staff, work with other professional staff, researching resources.”*

*“Provide lists of useful websites on the Learning Gateway. Provide resources for specific units of work. Upload VLE materials and develop VLE area for all subjects.”*

*“Using wikis. Thinking of starting to use Google Reader with Business Department and setting up RSS feeds. Have subscriptions and links on website to Oxford Reference suite, Sport GCSE databases, E-magazine for English and media, Financial Times, Newsbank, and links to Intute and other journals.”*

## Expenditure on stock and resources

We asked everyone how adequate the school library funding is to meet particular current stock and resource needs. Their replies are summarised below in descending order of the ‘good’ responses:

Stock and resources to support	Good	Adequate	Poor	Total
Reading for pleasure	543	301	96	940
Meeting student library needs	418	418	120	956
Range of abilities	344	428	172	944
Teaching, learning & student development	324	449	171	944
The full range of first languages	235	315	324	874
e-licences	155	288	417	860

**Table B5: Adequacy of current stock and resources**

This table gives a more nuanced and less positive picture than the more general baseline survey question. Although the coverage of reading for pleasure and meeting student library needs are good, 39.9% of respondents regard their coverage of e-licenses for relevant websites and e-publications as poor, as do 31% in relation to stock and resources to support the full range of languages in the school (although 13% of the interview respondents pointed out that there were only a few students whose first language was not English.) The e-licences issue reflected a conflict in some schools between the IT Department’s role and that of the library in acquiring school e-resources. The qualified librarians consistently reported more positively on all these themes, but as many were as negative as the other groups when reporting on first language support and e-licences.

## **Not just numbers**

In addition to the quantitative data presented here, the activity survey gathered an enormous amount of qualitative information about the activities of school librarians, much of which will be included in the e-version of this report to be published soon. Meanwhile here are two brief scenarios at opposite extremes, each based on a substantial number of people surveyed:

**Librarian A** collaborates closely with teachers in joint planning, delivery and review of lessons to enhance literacy and to develop student IL capabilities. (S)he is proactive in promoting reading for pleasure and in helping to develop the school VLE and has secured a wide range of resources, including e-resources. (S)he is strongly backed by senior management and teachers.

**Librarian B** is recognised for her/his experience but is seen as part of the support staff. (S)he tries to interest teachers in broadening the book-based resources, organises displays and competitions to promote reading, and concentrates IL work on one-to-one student support. (S)he supports teacher activities in the library by organising appropriate resources and has a significant informal pastoral role with various vulnerable children.

## Activity survey: Conclusions

This survey of secondary, independent (etc.) school librarians and what they do shows that:

- Almost 60% are supervised by senior managers; almost one in five have regular review meetings but another fifth have sporadic line management access at best. Librarians frequently hover in limbo between academic and support staff of the school
- Over half are actively working to agreed policies and development plans
- The range of senior management support and recognition for library staff ranges between from easy access to the SLT (40.6%) to apparent indifference.
- Most library staff actively promote reading for pleasure. They present displays, organise reading clubs and author visits, get involved in awards for reading and support school efforts to develop literacy and wider reading
- Three quarters actively engage in information literacy development in the school, but they may focus too much on finding and selecting information
- Many perform a unique pastoral role within the school (covered in e-project report)
- A significant minority report resourcing problems in meeting the first language needs of students and in obtaining e-licences.

Compared with the other groups of respondents, professionally qualified school librarians more frequently:

- Report officially to senior managers and have regular review meetings and actively work to agreed policies using development plans
- Have ready access to the SLT
- Promote reading by running reading clubs and undertaking literacy teaching
- Engage in information literacy development work (87% compared with 66% of 'unqualified' librarians) and conduct more lessons in classrooms (although, if the library will accommodate a full class this may be the preferred option)
- Monitor schemes of work from teachers
- Bookmark websites and create links to Internet resources
- Judge that they have good stock and resources to meet specific needs.

## Part C: Baseline Survey of Primary Schools

### Limitations of the Primary survey

This survey was administered electronically in parallel with the Secondary (etc.) and was publicized in the same ways. However, since relatively few primary school libraries employ a qualified librarian, with the usual ‘manager’ being a busy teacher, and because a number of Schools Library Services (SLSs) do not offer services to their local primary schools, it was much more difficult to ‘drum up’ responses. 651 replies were received before the end of April (a few more will be included in the full on-line report of this research.)

Since we were conscious that most of the respondents were likely to be teachers or volunteers, we concentrated on obtaining baseline information about the library rather than asking about how the library staff operated.

### What is a primary school library?

529 respondents (81%) have a designated library space and 121 (19%) operate a series of book corners in classrooms, usually from choice rather than necessity. 196 (30%) of the libraries are supervised by a school librarian when it is open, but it is clear from other replies that most are not professionally qualified, apart from a few who operate across small clusters of schools with support from the SLS; 179 (27%) are supervised by teachers and 56 (9%) by volunteers, with a variety of other arrangements in place to ensure that only 92 (14%) are supervised by ‘nobody’.

### How is the library run?

504 of the schools (77%) currently have access to professional librarian support via the SLS (457 of these or 90%), a children’s librarian from the public library service (53 or 8%), a full or part-time professional librarian (66 or 10%), or a professionally qualified parent, friend or volunteer (12 or 2%). The 23% of all the schools where no such support is available may well be at a significant disadvantage, judging by comments received over the years from Heads and other staff of schools when help is offered for the first time. Such questions as who will weed the stock to help make it fit for purpose and what criteria they will use must be left unanswered.

The average opening hours of the libraries are shown below:

Hours open	No. of schools	%
Up to 10	176	27
11 to 20	123	19
21-35	260	40
More than 35	77	12
Not specified	15	2
TOTAL	651	100

**Table C1: Average hours per week when the library is open and accessible to students in term-time**

More than a quarter of the schools appear to open the library mainly during breaks; however, a small minority of primary libraries (77 or 12% - usually part of a secondary school or equivalent) operate beyond the school day.

### Size of bookstock

Although expenditure on books is a crude indicator of library size (and may show lack of weeding) it at least provides an order of magnitude.

No. of items	No. of schools	%
Up to 500 items	45	7
501 – 1,000	113	17
1,001 - 2,000	129	20
2,001 - 3,500	141	22
3,501 - 5,000	80	12
More than 5,000	115	18
	623	96

**Table C2.1: Size of school bookstock**

Is there any relationship between the stock size and the number of pupils in the school?

	Up to 2,000 items	2,001 - 3,500	3,501 - 5,000	5,001 +	Total
More than 500	1	2	1	4	8
251 - 500	12	7	7	10	36
Up to 250 pupils	31	12	5	4	52
Total	44	21	13	18	96

*(26 of the 651 schools responding did not provide data on school roll or stock size.)*

**Table C2.2: Size of bookstock related to the number of students on roll**  
(% of all primary schools surveyed)

There is a closer relationship between stock size and pupil numbers than in the secondary (etc) survey. The average (median) stock size for the three pupil levels shown above progresses from data column 1 (up to 2,000) to column 2 and then to column 3 for the larger schools.

Focusing more closely on the stock, 86% of the schools reported the condition of their library stock (currency and physical state of books and other materials) as good (405 or 62%) or adequate (158 or 24%). However, it is a concern that 77 schools (12%) described their stock as patchy (10%) or poor. But how well are bookstocks differentiated to meet the full range of pupil needs (including language needs), a further dimension of the condition of the stock? As with the Secondary (etc.) survey, the responses this time were a little more negative. 549 of the respondents said that their stock was differentiated well (40%) or adequately (44%), whilst 97 said that their stock was patchily (13%) or poorly (2%) differentiated.

412 schools (63%) have a library management system in place.

## **Budget for books and other library resources**

Not all primary schools allocate a specific figure for the library budget: books and other library resources may appear under various headings, especially in schools which have classroom collections rather than a designated library. As a result, 201 schools did not provide budget information (or, in a few cases, gave a figure but did not say whether the picture had changed since the previous year):

Budget in £	Decreased	No change	Increased	Total
Up to 500	32	32	10	74
501 - 1,000	25	25	19	69
1,001 - 2,000	18	18	19	55
2,001 - 3,000	6	6	17	29
More than £3,000	8	8	11	27
No specific allocation	17	168	11	196
Totals	106	257	87	450

**Table C3: Size of school library budget for stock and resources and changes since the previous year**

19% of the respondents who gave full information have seen a budget increase since last year, 57% have stagnated at the same level as the previous year and 18% have suffered a decrease. The most badly affected are likely to be the 24% of school libraries (more than four fifths of the schools in that category) which have received a cut or static budget in a total of less than £1,000.

### **Primary survey: Conclusions**

This baseline survey attracted too low a response to support much generalization. However, it:

- Confirmed that relatively few primary schools have a designated librarian, although some professional support is usually to hand
- Shows a wide disparity in times when the library is open and accessible to pupils
- There is a fairly direct relationship between pupil numbers and stock size
- Most primary school library budgets are declining.

### **... and two general comments**

The tendency for school library budgets at all levels from primary upwards to be shrinking should cause concern amongst people who are interested in education of children. To be effective and attractive, school libraries need to constantly renew their stock. This will become increasingly more difficult if budgets continue to decline, and that is clearly the trend at present.

One other noteworthy finding that gradually emerged through this work is that where there is a schools library service available it makes a positive difference, not only to the availability of books and other resources for loan, but in helping 'unqualified' school librarians to extend what they can do and in supporting school promotion of reading for pleasure