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### **The role of the principal in an information literate school community: findings from an International Research Project**

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#### ***Abstract***

*Research has shown that principal support is a key factor in the implementation of effective school library or information literacy programs in schools. An international study of the principals' role in developing and supporting information literacy programs was conducted in Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Japan, Scotland, and South Korea. Principals and librarians in all countries except South Korea differed significantly on the amount of time they perceived the principal to spend on tasks related to the information literacy program. Principals believed they spent more time on these tasks than did librarians. Principals and librarians in Australia, Finland, and Scotland agreed about the amount of time they thought the principal should spend on such tasks in the future. In Canada, Japan, and South Korea, however, there were significant differences between the two groups; the principals believed they should spend more time on the tasks in the future than did the librarians. Overall mean scores on present and future perceptions suggested that in five of six countries*

*principals and librarians are well-aligned in their beliefs about the role of the principal; the exception was Scotland where school librarians are not qualified teachers. These and other findings should be useful to principals and librarians in schools throughout the world, as they struggle in difficult times to provide quality schooling and information services and to contribute to the development of literate and independent library users.*

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## Introduction

The details of the design, administration, and results of the international study of the role of the principal in developing school library programs have been shared by the research team through many presentations and publications. The latest of these is the IFLA Professional Report being launched at the 68th IFLA General Conference and Council here in Glasgow, Scotland. This summary paper has been drawn from these previous presentations and publications. Reports from each of the countries participating in the study are available on the website of the research project at <http://farrer.riv.csu.edu.au/principal/survey/report.html>.

The international study of the role of the principal in developing school library programs grew out of interest generated by qualitative studies completed in Canada and Australia (see, for example, Hay & Henri, 1995; Henri & Hay, 1996; LaRocque & Oberg, 1990; Oberg, 1996) and reported at conferences of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL). One impetus for the study, for the Australian and Canadian researchers, was the desire to know if similar findings would emerge from studies conducted in countries with educational systems and school library development that were quite different from those of Canada and Australia. Involving non-English speaking countries in the international study reflected to some degree the diverse cultures and languages of IFLA members.

The international study, funded both IFLA and IASL, involved surveying both principals and librarians about principal support. The Australian and Canadian researchers established an International Research Reference Group (IRRG) of researchers from the seven countries involved in this international study (see Table 1). The roles of the members of this group were to: (a) provide input and advice regarding the adaptation and translation of the quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments for their countries; and (b) plan and administer the procedures for data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings in their countries.

Table 1  
International Research Reference Group\*

Australia	James Henri Lyn Hay	Senior Lecturer Lecturer, School of Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga
Canada	Dianne Oberg	Associate Professor, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Alberta, Edmonton
Finland	Liisa Niinikangas	Information Specialist and Partner, Lighthouse Consulting, Tampere

France	Colette Charrier	President of FADBEN and Teacher-librarian, Lycee Guez de Balzac, Angouleme
Japan	Setsuko Koga	Professor, Department of Education, Aoyama Gakuin University, Shibuyaku
Scotland	James Herring	Head of School (Acting), Department of Communication and Information Studies, Queen Margaret College, Aberdeen
South Korea	Yoon Ok Han	Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, Kyonggi do University, Suwon-City

\* Titles and affiliations in 1998.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

The international study of the role of the principal in developing school library programs was designed to collect and analyze primarily quantitative data about the perceptions and beliefs of principals and teacher librarians in a diverse range of countries and educational settings. While the qualitative studies conducted in Australia and Canada had provided in-depth understanding of a small number of schools in two countries, the researchers felt that it was important to test the validity of these findings through a quantitative study. Having identified the factors of influence and support that exist between the principal and the teacher-librarian through qualitative studies in two countries, the researchers undertook the development of quantitative instruments to test the existence of these factors across a broader range of schools and in a larger number of countries.

### Design of Survey Questionnaires

The questionnaires used in the international study were developed and tested in Australia. The questionnaire items were based on interview questions, data categories, and key factors derived from the original qualitative studies. Two model questionnaire sets--one for principals and one for librarians--were developed. The three instruments in each of the questionnaire sets included both closed-choice and open-ended questions.

Instrument 1 was designed to identify demographic variables for each of the country samples including the characteristics of the principals and librarians and the characteristics of individual schools. Principal and librarian respondents were required to provide their own personal and professional details. In addition, the principals were asked to provide some whole school data, while the librarians were asked to provide specific library data. In this way, the researchers reduced the data input burden for participants and avoided duplication of data.

Instrument 2 was designed to identify the level of principal support for the library program and the librarian. Both principals and librarian answered the same 50 questions (31 perception factors and 19 belief factors), using 5-point rating scales.

In Instrument 3, both principals and librarians were asked the same 9 open-ended questions, related to the strengths and challenges of the library, the contributions of librarians to teaching and learning, the nature of information literacy, barriers to integration of information skills, the promotion of the library, and the respondents roles in developing and supporting an information literate school community. Librarians were asked two extra questions related to ways they used to maintain their credibility and ways that their principals could provide them with additional support.

More detail on the background to this study and on the design and administration of

the international study is provided in other papers (Oberg, Hay & Henri, 2001a, 2001b). Readers should note that the terminology used for principals and librarians in schools varies considerably across the seven countries involved in this international study. Except in the case of direct quotes or where clarity of meaning requires, the terms “principal,” “librarian,” and “library” are used in this paper.

### Survey Participants

The researchers in each country selected the survey participants in the way most appropriate to their local context. In no case was a country-wide survey attempted. In several cases, there were not librarians in many of the schools in the country or in the schools in the regions that could be selected for the study. The response rates for each country are presented in Table 2, at the end of this section.

In Australia the study was conducted within the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), a relatively homogeneous socio-political area with a population of approximately 310,000. All schools within the ACT within the public and Catholic systems that employed both a full time principal and a teacher librarian were surveyed. There were 246 schools included in the project: 191 were public schools (with K-6, 7-10, and 11-12 schools) and 55 were Catholic schools (with K-6 and 7-12 schools).

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 was the 252 schools, scattered across the province, each having a teacher-librarian assigned at least one-half time to the school library program.

In Finland the study was conducted in 86 upper secondary schools in southern Finland. The Helsinki region (including Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, and Kauniainen), the only metropolitan area in Finland with the 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 Japan the study was conducted in 100 schools: 40 were high schools serving students aged 15-18 in Tokyo, an urban context, and 60 were primary and junior high schools serving students aged 6-14 in northern and central part of Japan, a rather rural area.

In Scotland, virtually all state secondary schools (serving students aged 11-18) have professional librarians who are referred to as "school librarians." For this project, it was decided to survey 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. Questionnaires were sent out to 200 schools (50% of all Scottish secondary schools) with an equal balance of urban and rural schools.

In South Korea the study was conducted across the 11 high school districts of Seoul. Selection of the research participants could not be done by random sampling because all high schools in Seoul do not have teacher-librarians. In all of Korea there are 252 teacher-librarians, and 175 teacher-librarians are in high schools. The 141 high schools that have teacher-librarians in Seoul were selected as the research participants.

In France the study was conducted in two different educational regions, Grenoble and Nice. The questionnaires were sent to 295 secondary schools, including colleges serving

students aged 11-15 and lycees serving students aged 15-18. One in three of the schools in the two regions were contacted. The schools were located in different geographical areas: urban, rural, remote, mountainous and seaside. The researchers in France decided to complete their own data analysis. Although overall findings from France were reported at the 1998 IFLA conference, the data from that study is not yet available in English and therefore could not be included in this paper.

Table 2  
Survey Response Rate

Country	Schools Surveyed	Principal Response		Teacher-Librarian Response	
	n	n	%	n	%
Australia	246	38	15%	40	16%
Canada	252	40	16%	59	23%
Finland	86	40	47%	36	42%
Japan	100	68	68%	68	68%
Scotland	200	44	22%	42	21%
South Korea	141	43	30%	44	31%

#### Data Collection and Analysis

Each IRRG member was responsible for the collection of data in their country and for the entry of those data via the World Wide Web into a database at the School of Information Studies, Charles Sturt University (CSU). The quantitative data (responses to Instrument 1 and 2) entered into the CSU database was analyzed using the SPSS software program by Hay and Henri at CSU. Frequency analysis was used to get an overall picture of the data, and t-tests were used to check for significant differences between the responses of principals and teacher-librarians. In order to get an overall comparison of the data across the countries and to test the correlations between the overall responses of librarians and principals in those countries, overall mean scores were calculated for Present Perceptions, Future Perceptions and Beliefs for the 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 qualitative data (responses to Instrument 3) entered into the CSU database was analyzed using a framework and content analysis procedures developed by Oberg at the University of Alberta. The NUDIST\*QSR software program, designed for use with textual qualitative data, was used to gather together all the responses to each open-ended question from all the principals in each country and all the librarians in each country. Responses to the open-ended questions from Instrument 3 were analyzed through a process of reading and re-reading responses, noting the content of responses, identifying themes or categories according to the content, and then grouping and re-grouping 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.

## Findings from the International Study

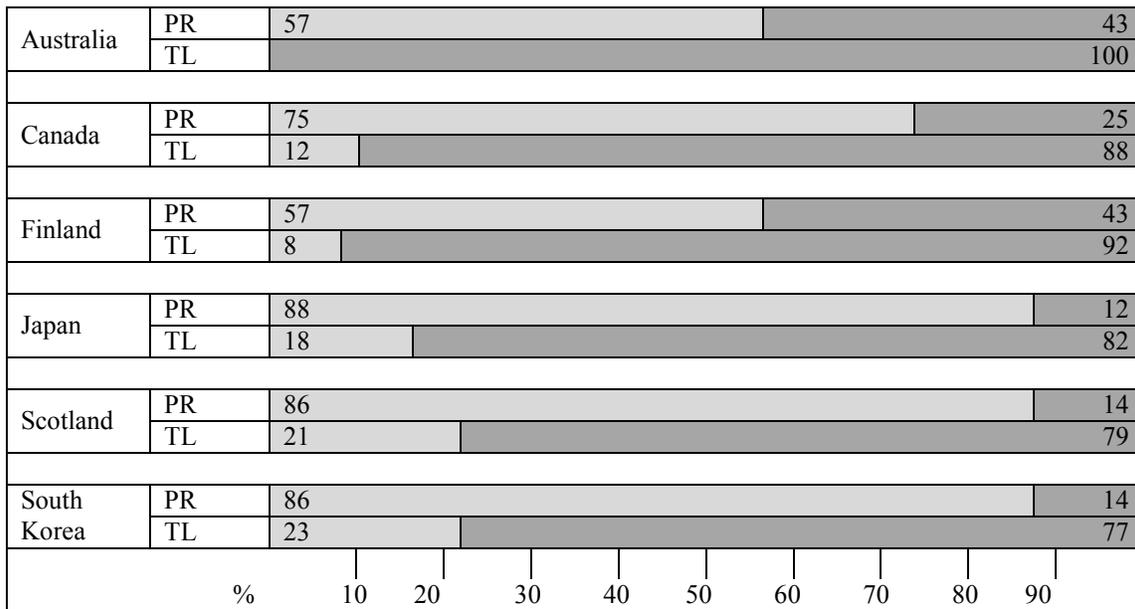
In this section of the paper, the researchers give highlights of the findings of the study, with examples from the findings for individual countries and with examples from the findings of the cross-country comparative analysis.

### Findings from Instrument 1

Two differences evident in the data from Instrument 1 were the gender and age of the principals and the librarians. Across all of the countries in the study, most principals were male and most librarians were female (Table 3). This gender difference was statistically significant ( $p \leq .001$ ) for all of the countries in the study, even though the actual gender percentages varied from country to country. The percentages ranged from 57% in Australia to 88% in Japan for male principals and from 74% in France to 100% in Australia for female librarians.

Most principals were older than most librarians. This age difference was also significant ( $p \leq .001$ ) for all of the countries. Most principals were in their fifties while most librarians were in their forties (Table 4). The exceptions were in South Korea where most principals were over 60, in Scotland where most principals were in their forties, and in Finland where most librarians were in their fifties.

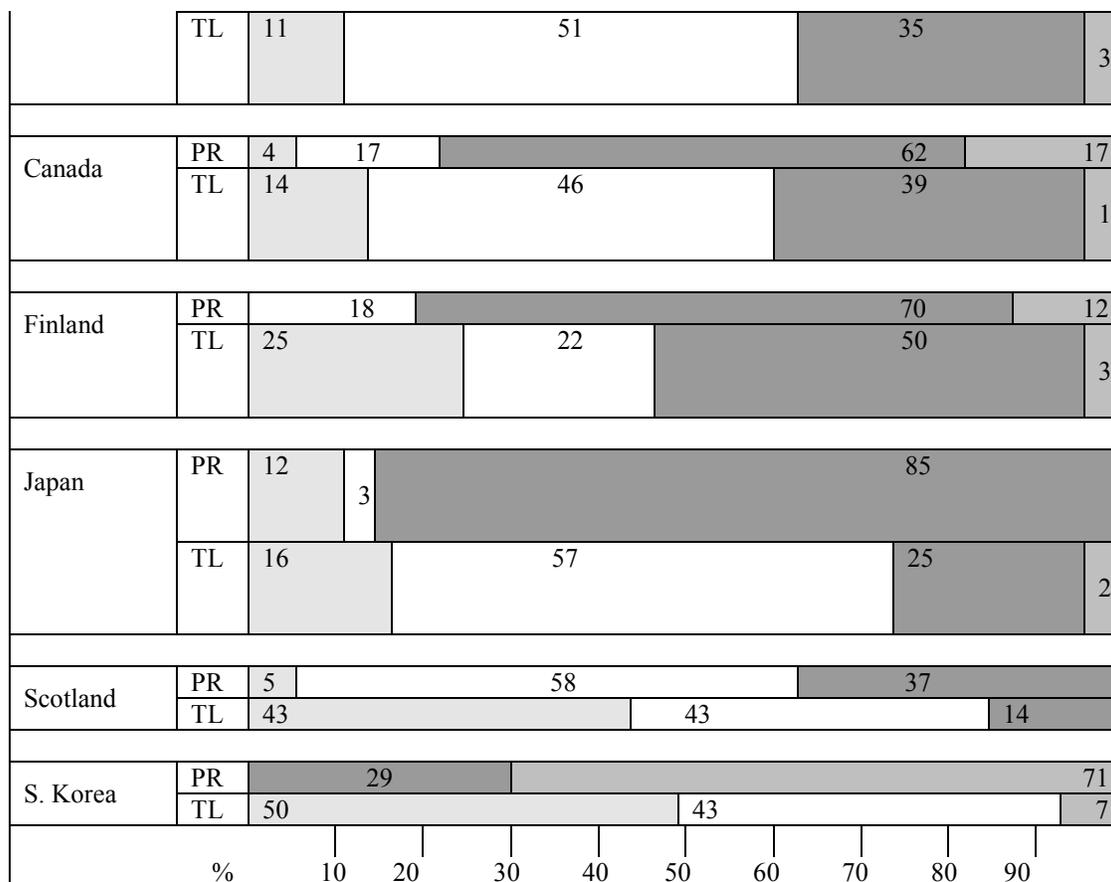
Table 3  
Gender of Survey Participants



PR – Principal	Male	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #d3d3d3; border: 1px solid black;"></span>
TL – Teacher Librarian	Female	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #696969; border: 1px solid black;"></span>

Table 4  
Age of Survey Participants

Australia	PR	6	43	51
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PR – Principal TL – Teacher Librarian	Under 40	
	40-49	
	50-59	
	Over 60	

## Findings from Instrument 2

### Overall Mean Scores for Perceptions and Beliefs

An overall comparison of the data across the countries was conducted using overall mean scores calculated for Present Perceptions, Future Perceptions and Beliefs for the librarians and the principals in each country. The overall means and p-values for comparisons are reported in Table 5.

Table 5  
Overall Mean Scores, Present and Future Perceptions

	AU	CA	FI	JP	KR	SC
<b>Present</b>						
Librarian - Mean	88.71	95.75	66.00	71.72	73.89	73.83
Principal - Mean	103.03	107.14	77.88	84.07	81.76	87.07
p-value	.001	.003	.008	.001	.038	.004
<b>Future</b>						
Librarian - Mean	104.29	96.85	85.19	86.99	82.70	94.67

Principal - Mean	108.80	111.83	85.48	103.49	96.95	98.59
p-value	.254	.003	.956	.000	.001	.430
<b>Beliefs</b>						
Librarian - Mean	62.55	64.48	41.31	55.97	56.68	56.07
Principal - Mean	60.60	64.29	44.83	60.04	54.53	50.64
p-value	.154	.890	.169	.019	.208	.001

Based on the overall mean scores for Present Perceptions, principals and librarians in all countries but South Korea differed significantly ( $p \leq .01$ ) on the amount of time they perceived the principal to spend on tasks. In all countries, principals viewed themselves as spending more time or slightly more time on tasks than did the librarians. The four main tasks on which the principal and teacher-librarian participants in all countries disagreed were:

- advocating and facilitating the development of an information literate school community
- demonstrating support for collaboration among the TL and teaching staff
- ensuring that the TL has an appropriate allocation of support staff
- allocating adequate, flexible time for the TL to administer the LRC.

According to the overall mean scores for Future Perceptions, the principals and librarians in Australia, Finland, and Scotland appeared to be aligned (no significant difference in their responses) 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 were significant differences between the two groups; the principals believed they should spend more time on the tasks in the future than did the librarians. For example, in Canada principals and librarians differed significantly on 22% of the tasks, in South Korea, on 42% of the tasks, and in Japan, on 63% of the tasks. The following tasks were common to these three countries where the principal and librarian significantly differed:

- advocating and facilitating the development of an information literate school community
- informing new staff about the importance of collaborating with the TL
- 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 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 librarians in Canada, South Korea, and Japan have relatively low expectations regarding the information literacy advocacy role of the principal in the school.

According to the overall mean scores for Beliefs, principals and librarians in five of the six countries appear to be well-aligned in their beliefs. The exception is Scotland where school librarians are not qualified teachers – this finding was of particular interest to the school library profession in the UK, as James Herring 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.*  
(Herring, 1998, pp. 3-4)

### 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 librarians rated each of the tasks in terms of the time/attention that the principal was giving the task at Present and should give the task in Future. Table 6 provides a cross-country comparison of 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 by the letter 'M.'

Table 6 identifies considerable alignment between principals and librarians in both Canada and Japan. However, we found that this alignment occurred at opposite ends of the attention spectrum. While there was overall consensus in Canada that principals *did not* need to focus more attention on the majority of tasks (except for two items, Q.12 and 31),

Table 6  
Activities Identified as Requiring Significantly More Attention ( $p \leq .01$ )

No	Question	CAN		AUS		FIN		SCO		S KOR		JAP	
		L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P	L	P
1	Facilitate developmt of ILSC					M		M	M	M	M		M
2	Ensure info literacy in school plan			M		M		M	M	M	M		M
3	Facilitate professional developmt of staff										M		M
4	Advocate TL role in school curriculum					M				M	M	M	M
5	Support collaboration between TL & staff					M					M		M
6	Ensure SLRC reflects school goals				M	M			M	M			M
7	Ensure approp allocation of support staff							M					M
8	Allocate adequate, flexible time for TL										M	M	M
9	Encourage staff involvemt in developmt of SLRC					M		M	M		M	M	M
10	Encourage staff invest time to CPPT with TL			M		M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
11	Facilitate staff PD in understanding & use of IT							M		M	M	M	M
12	Inform new staff re imptc of collaboration with TL		M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
13	Support currency/relevancy of SLRC collection					M				M	M	M	M
14	Encourage staff debate re information policy			M	M	M		M			M	M	M
15	Ensure signif funding allocated to SLRC budget					M					M	M	M
16	Seek outside funding to supplement SLRC budget			M		M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
17	Engage in regular/timely communication with TL							M		M	M		M
18	Visit SLRC to observe work of TL					M				M	M		
19	Encourage TL to debate/justify current practice				M						M	M	M
20	Ask questions of TL re teaching & learning								M		M	M	M
21	Rely on TL to keep PR abreast of devmts re TL role			M						M		M	M
22	Seek advice from TL re whole school info managemt			M				M			M	M	M
23	Encourage TL to take risks									M	M		M
24	Encourage staff to use range of resources in teaching				M			M	M	M	M	M	M
25	Encourage TL ldrship in devmt of info skills continuum							M	M		M		M
26	Work with TL to develop his/her personal PD plan					M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
27	Advocate TL as member of key schoolwide committees										M	M	M
28	Encourage info skill integration and assessment by staff					M					M		M
29	Provide time release & funding for TL's ongoing PD			M		M	M			M	M	M	M
30	If TL not on key cttee, PR ensures SLRC needs addressed			M		M		M			M	M	M
31	Seeks staff feedback re quality of SLRC services	M		M	M	M		M	M		M	M	M

principals and librarians in Japan agreed that principals *did* need to spend more time/attention on nearly two-thirds of the tasks (20 out of 31 tasks). There was only one task which both respondent groups in Japan agreed *did not* require further attention – Q.18 which dealt with the principal visiting the library to observe the work of the librarian.

In both Japan and South Korea, the principals identified a large number of tasks which they felt required more of their attention, than those identified by the librarians. One possible cause of this high level of Future attention might be that the process of completing these survey instruments acted as an awareness-raising exercise for the principals as to the potential support they could give their librarian. In Australia, respondent groups were aligned

on 68% of the tasks, however, 7 of the 10 remaining tasks were identified by the librarian as requiring more principal attention. This suggests that Australian librarians have higher expectations of principal support than Australian principals. The five items identified as requiring significantly more principal attention across all countries included:

- informs new teaching staff about the importance of collaborating with the librarian
- encourages the teaching staff to invest time in cooperatively planning and teaching with the librarian
- actively seeks outside school funding possibilities that can be used to supplement the library budget
- seeks feedback from staff about their impressions of the quality of library services works with the librarian to develop the librarian's personal professional development plan.

### **Findings from Instrument 3**

In this section of the paper, samples are presented the findings from Instrument 3 from the studies conducted in Canada, Australia, Scotland, South Korea and Finland. The Japan study did not include Instrument 3. It also should be born in mind 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, for Canada, themes for each of the open-ended questions from Instrument 3 have been derived from the responses of 43-47 of the 59 librarians and 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.

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

Funding was one of the challenges in school libraries that was high on the list for 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 (information technology) for 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. In Canada, Scotland and Finland, support for the library from school administrators and from teachers also was seen as a key challenge.

Participants in all of the five countries mentioned the provision and organization of information and resources as one of the critical functions of librarians. All but South Korea identified inservicing staff and cooperative planning and teaching as the other two critical contributions that librarians made to the teaching and learning in schools. Principals and librarians in Canada and Australia differed in the emphasis they placed on these two functions: principals tended to focus on the librarians' role in professional development, in enabling things to happen, while 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 librarian in IT, both IT management and IT user education, was 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 less student-centered and that teachers might rely more on the textbook approach.

The next question asked about the impact of the librarian being absent for more than two weeks. Participants in three out of four of the countries (no responses were available from South Korea for this and the next question) 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 librarian was 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 generally in Scotland and Finland no replacement staff would be provided.

The strongest element in the definition of information literacy was the ability to access information from a variety of sources. This element was shared by participants from all five countries. Principals and 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 was some recognition of the process approach to information access and use but only in Australia was a specific process 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 librarians to work together was seen a barrier by principals and librarians in Australia, Scotland and Finland and by 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 librarians in all but Finland. Educational practices such as compulsory courses with rigid content requirements, university entrance examinations, and government testing programs were seen as barriers by 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.

### **Applications of the Research**

Each researcher participating in the international study gained new insights into his or her own local situation which informed and extended his or her understanding of his or her local situation, as the following comments from researchers in participating countries illustrate:

*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, p. 6)*

*[In South 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, p. 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, p. 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, p. 13)*

However, the individual researchers and their respective local communities of school library practitioners, educators, and researchers could also derive insights from the findings of the cross-country comparative analysis of data. We all could learn from each other regarding programs and strategies that effectively support the development of information literacy in schools. The researchers involved in this international study acknowledge the limitations of the study, but they hope that this and other reports of their experiences will be of value to others engaged in research at the local or international level. They also hope that the findings of the study will prove useful to principals and librarians in schools throughout the world, as they struggle in difficult times to provide quality schooling and information services and to contribute to the development of literate and independent library users.

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