

FEATURE

New Intern School Libr Guidelines

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The publication in 2015 of new international school library guidelines was the culmination of a two-year process involving a wide network of contributors. The process was guided by the Joint Committee of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) School Libraries Section and the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL). The new guidelines remain grounded in and consistent with principles expressed in the 1999 *IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto*. The *IFLA School Library Guidelines*, 2nd edition, interpret in practical terms those foundational principles and reflect current research, practice, and conditions of 21st-century school librarianship.

Value of International School Library Guidelines

What is the purpose or value of international guideline documents? Gwyneth Evans explained the purpose and value of such documents in this way:

We live in an interconnected world and what happens in one place does affect us all. We have standards and values in our profession, and we want to develop statements that reflect those standards. We do not want to duplicate high-level documents when there is so much to do in implementing them and addressing the changes we face. By sharing our knowledge and experience, we are reinforcing our common humanity while understanding our diversity. (2007, 6)

As noted in an earlier publication (Oberg 2015), those involved in creating the *IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto* and the *IFLA School Library Guidelines* faced the challenges faced by all who develop standards and guidelines documents, plus the

additional challenges of creating documents that would be meaningful to educators working in different roles and in diverse economic and sociocultural environments. All guidelines represent a compromise between what we aspire to achieve and what we can reasonably expect to achieve.

People can and do make use of the manifesto and guidelines in many ways: to inform the development of national and local policies and guidelines; to support strategic and operational plans, especially in schools and in regional educational authorities; and to act as resources in the initial and continuing training of teachers and librarians. However, the manifesto and guidelines have to be used while bearing in mind the local context, the current situation, and the potential for future changes in the situation and in the documents.

Historical Roots of the Manifesto and Guidelines

National and regional school library associations and educational bodies had been developing school library standards and guidelines for decades before the development of international school library guidelines was first attempted. However, with the inauguration of IASL in 1971 and the School Libraries Section of IFLA in 1977, interest in the development of international school library guidelines grew. In the past decade, the collaboration of the two groups has been strengthened through the IFLA and IASL joint committee, currently chaired by Karen Gavigan of the University of South Carolina.

The two groups have similar missions, reflecting the understanding and belief in the role of school libraries in “teaching and learning for all” (IFLA 1999, 1). Both groups strive for international representation. At the time the guidelines

were under review and revision, leaders in the two groups came from the following countries: for IFLA, Canada, France, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, and United States; and for IASL, Australia, Canada, Croatia, Jamaica, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, South Africa, Turkey, and the United States.

Development of the IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto

The 1993 IFLA preconference on “School Libraries in the Developing World,” held in Caldès de Montbui, Spain, was a strong catalyst for developing international school library guidelines. At the Caldès meeting, keynote papers addressed the essential issues; national country profiles depicted school library development on every continent; and the participants worked in discussion groups to develop recommendations for action for the organizing bodies: UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), IFLA, and IASL. The participants from twenty-eight countries noted that the state of school libraries at the time was generally poor and that school libraries lacked support among politicians, government officials, and school administrators.

After the Caldès meeting, to provide a credible basis on which to develop a statement on school libraries, an international survey was conducted on school library policies. The IFLA School Libraries Section took the lead in drafting the *IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto*, and in 1998 a UNESCO-sponsored meeting was held in Amsterdam to discuss the final document. Sixty school library experts attended, including delegates from North America, Europe, Senegal, Turkey, South

Africa, Sri Lanka, and Chile. A small committee prepared the version that was approved by IFLA's Professional Committee and steered the manifesto through the protocols of ratification by UNESCO.

The manifesto begins with a clear statement of vision:

The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens.

The remainder of the document is organized around six elements critical to the development and maintenance of this vision: mission; funding, legislation and networks; goals of the school library; staff; operation and management; and implementing the manifesto.

During the development of the *IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto*, the issue was raised as to the need for school library standards or guidelines to support the principles laid out in the manifesto and to interpret those principles in practical terms. A Working Group on School Library Guidelines was soon established, and a final version of the guidelines, edited by Glenys Willars (United Kingdom) and Tove Pemmer Saetre (Norway), was presented to the School Libraries Section in August 2002. Later that year, the *School Library Guidelines* were approved by the Governing Board of IFLA and endorsed by UNESCO.

Process of Revising the 2002 Guidelines

The revision of the 2002 edition of the *IFLA/UNESCO School Library Guidelines* was the result of an orderly

process of review and energetic debate by the members of the IFLA School Libraries Section, in association with members of IASL.

At the 2013 IFLA conference in Helsinki, Finland, the chair of the School Libraries Section Standing Committee Randi Lundvall (Norway) began a review of both the *School Library Manifesto* and the 2002 *School Library Guidelines*. The consensus was that the manifesto, translated into thirty-seven languages and one of only three IFLA manifestos to garner UNESCO ratification, remained relevant, expressing universal principles of school librarianship and being used successfully to raise the profile of school libraries in schools, regions, and countries. The 2002 *School Library Guidelines*, however, did not entirely reflect current research, practice, and conditions of 21st-century school librarianship.

A timeline for the revision of the guidelines was established, and the work commenced. Over the next two years, meetings and workshops were held around the world (Singapore, Bali, France, Russia, United Kingdom, Jamaica), and draft versions of the guidelines were distributed on IFLA and IASL electronic discussion lists. Comments and suggestions were received, debated, and integrated into each of five draft versions of the guidelines by the IFLA School Libraries Section chair Barbara Schultz-Jones (U.S.A.), and me (section secretary from Canada).

The final tasks were assembling a bibliography of citations of essential school library texts (published in 2000 or more recently) that would be useful to an international audience, and extracting a set of recommendations from the guidelines that could be used as highlights of the guidelines' major themes. The final draft document was submitted for approval to the IFLA Governing

Board in mid-January 2015. The new second edition of *IFLA School Library Guidelines* was launched twice, first at the IASL 2015 annual conference in June at Maastricht, Netherlands, and then at the 2015 IFLA World Library and Information Conference in Cape Town, South Africa. With this accomplishment, the focus has turned to disseminating and implementing the updated guidelines.

Content of the New Revised School Library Guidelines

The full text of the 2015 *IFLA School Library Guidelines* is available on the IFLA website at <www.ifla.org/publications/node/9512?og=52>. Readers may wish to begin their consideration of the content of the new international school library guidelines by examining the Executive Summary and the Recommendations in the guidelines on pages 7–11.

The new *IFLA School Library Guidelines* needed to exemplify the universal principles of librarianship expressed in the 1999 *IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto*. The mandate of the guidelines was and is "to inform decision makers at national and local levels around the world, to give support and guidance to the library community, and to help school leaders implement the principles expressed in the manifesto" (IFLA 2015, 12).

To address the current and future condition of school librarianship worldwide, the new edition of the guidelines is intended to be:

...both inspirational and aspirational. The many contributors to this document were inspired by the mission and values of the school library, and they recognized that school library personnel and educational decision-makers, even in countries with well-resourced

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and well-supported school libraries, must struggle to be relevant to the learning needs of the whole school community and to respond thoughtfully to the changing information environment within which they work. (2015, 12)

The evolving nature of the context for school libraries provides a challenging environment for creating and implementing guidelines that can be used to guide practice and to advocate for future improvements in the local situation. And, while meeting the proposed standards is important,

...what is more important is the way that the members of the school community think about school libraries: working in service of the moral purpose of school libraries (i.e., making a difference in the lives of young people) and of the educational purpose of school libraries (i.e., improving teaching and learning for all). (2015, 13)

What Is New in the New School Library Guidelines

The revised guidelines emphasize the elements of a school library that, based on an empirical foundation of more than sixty years of inter-

national research, are most critical to ensuring that a school library contributes in positive ways to the “teaching and learning for all” specified in the manifesto. These elements include the definition of a school library, the teaching and learning role of a school librarian, the education of a school librarian, leadership and collaboration, and evaluation and evidence-based practice.

Definition of a School Library

The definition of a school library now includes significant distinguishing features: “a qualified school librarian with formal education,” “targeted high-quality diverse collections (print, multimedia and digital) that support the school’s formal and informal curriculum,” and “an explicit policy and plan for ongoing growth and development” (IFLA 2015, 17). By including the school librarian as an integral part of the definition, the role of the school librarian as an educator is emphasized. Not all school libraries currently have a “qualified” school librarian, and many countries do not yet have a specialized way of educating school librarians, but this inclusion of the school librarian is an aspirational feature that research demonstrates will have an impact on student learning.

Teaching and Learning Role of a School Librarian

The school librarian’s role in teaching and learning is central to the school library program. The role is recognized by several terms (school librarian, school library media specialist, teacher librarian, *professeurs documentalistes*), but the role itself includes “instruction, management, leadership and collaboration, and community engagement” (IFLA 2015, 28). The instructional role of a school librarian emphasizes reading and information literacy as well as inquiry-based learning. This instructional role encompasses work with teachers, school administrators, and community members as well as with students.

Education of a School Librarian

The instructional role of a school librarian requires that a school librarian have at least the same level of education as a classroom teacher, and the leadership and collaboration role requires that a school librarian have the same level of education as other leaders in the school. The recommendations related to this requirement were controversial but are supported by research. Exemplary school librarians display the traits of exemplary teachers;

successful teaching experience is necessary for school librarians to understand and solve instructional problems. They plan with teachers, use innovative teaching strategies, and develop collections that support the curriculum. School librarians need classroom teaching experience in addition to preparation in curriculum development and implementation.

Leadership and Collaboration

Also controversial was the leadership aspect of the role of a school librarian. Although a school librarian commonly acts as a resource person for teachers and is expected to co-plan and co-teach with colleagues, the idea of a school librarian taking on leadership activities within the school found less acceptance. However, the research is clear that a school librarian needs to provide in-service training for colleagues. This is because many of the activities that contribute to successful learning and teaching have not been emphasized in teacher education in the past, and because schools are bombarded with changes in curricula, pedagogies, resources, and technologies. Supportive professional development is often best provided at the school or district level where teachers and school librarians learn together; such in-service programs require leadership skills.

Evaluation and Evidence-Based Practice

Evaluation of school library programs and services helps ensure that they support the goals of the school. Evaluation is usually about accountability, but it can also be about transformation, influencing people's thinking about the school library and developing support for the school library. One of the newer approaches to school library evaluation is evidence-based

Table 1. Contents of the new IFLA School Library Guidelines.

IFLA School Library Guidelines, 2nd ed., 2015	
Chapter 1. Mission and Purposes of a School Library	1.1 Introduction 1.2 Context 1.3 Definition of a School Library 1.4 Role of a School Library within a School 1.5 Conditions for an Effective School Library Program 1.6 Vision Statement for a School Library 1.7 Mission Statement for a School Library 1.8 School Library Services 1.9 Evaluation of School Library Services and Programs
Chapter 2. Legal and Financial Framework for a School Library	2.1 Introduction 2.2 Legal Bases and Issues 2.3 Ethical Bases and Issues 2.4 Infrastructure Support for School Library Development 2.5 Policies 2.6 Planning 2.7 Funding
Chapter 3. Human Resources for a School Library	3.1 Introduction 3.2 Staffing Roles and Rationale 3.3 Definition of a School Librarian 3.4 Competencies Needed to Provide School Library Programs 3.5 Roles of a Professional School Librarian 3.6 Roles and Competencies of Paraprofessional School Library Staff 3.7 Roles and Competencies of a School Library Volunteer 3.8 Ethical Standards
Chapter 4. Physical and Digital Resources of a School Library	4.1 Introduction 4.2 Facilities 4.3 Collection Development and Management
Chapter 5. Programs and Activities of a School Library	5.1 Introduction 5.2 Programs and Activities 5.3 Literacy and Reading Promotion 5.4 Media and Information Literacy Instruction 5.5 Inquiry-Based Learning Models 5.6 Technology Integration 5.7 Professional Development for Teachers 5.8 Instructional Role of a School Librarian
Chapter 6. School Library Evaluation and Public Relations	6.1 Introduction 6.2 School Library Evaluation and Evidence-Based Practice 6.3 Approaches to School Library Evaluation 6.4 Impacts of School Library Program Evaluation 6.5 School Library Public Relations

Shared Concerns

IFLA Guidelines and AASL Standards

The AASL *National School Library Standards* (2018) are framed through six Shared Foundations (Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, Engage) and four Domains (Think, Create, Share, Grow). The essential aspects of the *IFLA School Library Guidelines* are reflected in sixteen Recommendations. Two of the concerns shared by the IFLA and AASL communities are highlighted here.

Evidence-Based Practice

IFLA Recommendations 4 and 15 state that evidence-based practice should guide the services and programs of a school library by providing the data needed for improving professional practice and for ensuring that the school library makes a positive contribution to teaching and learning, and continues to meet the changing needs of the school community. These concepts are represented in the AASL Domains **Share** and **Grow**. For example, the school library standards encourage “engaging with measurable learner outcomes and with data sources to improve resources, instruction, and services” (I.C.3), and “using local and external data to inform ongoing adjustments to...the resource collection” (IV.D.4) and to anticipate “learners’ needs and [adapt] the learning environment in accordance with evidence-based best practices” (V.D.2).

Diversity and Inclusion

IFLA Recommendations 10 and 14 acknowledge the diversity of school communities and the need for school library staff to work collaboratively with them to develop collections, services, and programs consistent with the school’s curriculum and with the national, ethnic, and cultural identities of members of each school community. Such inclusive practices are essential to the achievement of the academic, cultural, and social goals of the school. In the AASL Standards this theme is represented within the Shared Foundation **Include** by focusing on individual differences in learners; the diverse developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of learners; and equitable access to learning opportunities, academic and social support, and other resources necessary for learners’ success.

practice. Using this approach, a school librarian uses three kinds of data to improve practice: findings from formal research (evidence FOR practice); locally produced data such as schedules of instructional activities (evidence IN practice); and user-reported and user-generated data, measuring the impact of what school librarians do (evidence OF practice) (Todd 2009). Evidence-based practice is a holistic and integrated approach to using data for decision making that demands new kinds of competencies from the school library professional.

Applying the Guidelines

Several features of the second edition of the *IFLA School Library Guidelines* document will assist school library professionals and educational policymakers in using the guidelines to focus efforts to evolve the development of a school library or support advocacy purposes.

Recommendations: The inclusion of a set of sixteen recommendations provides a focused set of primary themes from the guidelines. These recommendations could be used as a framework for evaluation and/or development of school library programs and services.

Examples: An important addition to the 2015 guidelines is the inclusion of various examples of school library practice from around the world. The examples are used to illustrate salient points within the document and can help to highlight the many ways in which schools around the world are already implementing best practices in school librarianship.

Glossary: There are many different perspectives on school libraries around the world, and different terminology is used to describe these perspectives and practices. The glossary helps make the guidelines meaningful to educators in many

different roles (e.g., librarians, teachers, school administrators, superintendents, ministers of education, ministers of culture, and so on), working in very diverse economic and sociocultural environments.

Extensions: No one document is likely to include all the information that its users might need. Additional resources in the guidelines document include a bibliography of works consulted during the preparation of the guidelines and contributed during an international call for citations of essential school library texts (2000 and newer) and a set of appendices designed to support various areas of the guidelines and to provide additional detail.

Conclusion: A Continuum of Practice

The second edition of the *IFLA School Library Guidelines* is meant to apply to school libraries of many different kinds, and the importance of local context is addressed frequently throughout the document. All school libraries, regardless of context or placement in developed or developing countries, exist on a continuum of practice. Regardless of the context, ultimately school libraries embody the basic concept expressed in the *IFLA/UNESCO School Library Manifesto* of “teaching and learning for all.”

The guidelines have no force of law, only the force of persuasion or inspiration, and they need to be implemented nationally and locally through legislation and through professional practice. It is possible that the international guidelines will inspire the development of national or regional standards and/or legislation where none exists at present.

The *IFLA School Library Guidelines* will need to be updated in the future. Our educational environ-

ment continues to evolve, and school libraries will evolve to address the challenges of educating current and future generations. The leaders within IFLA and IASL have a well-established pattern of collaboration and a shared commitment to keeping our guidelines relevant to our rapidly changing learning environments:

These school library guidelines envision a world of inclusion, equity of opportunity and social justice. They will be implemented in the context of the 21st century, characterized by change, mobility, and interconnection across different levels and sectors. (IFLA 2015, 13)

Author's Note: A longer version of this article was published in English and Turkish (Oberg and Schultz-Jones 2015). The historical context for the development of the 2015 IFLA School Library Guidelines was based upon the recollections and personal documents of several members of the IFLA School Libraries Section Standing Committee and the IFLA Literacy and Reading Section Standing Committee, in addition to the published items in the list of works cited. Special thanks to Gwyneth Evans (Canada), Randi Lundvall (Norway), and Barbara Schultz-Jones (U.S.A.).



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Section Standing Committee for twelve years and has been an active member of IASL since 1982. She and Barbara Schultz-Jones, University of North Texas, are coediting a book on international school library education, forthcoming from DeGruyter Saur in August 2018.

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